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ABSTRACT

This issue contains 21 articles discussing library-sponsored literacy programs, tutoring and programming techniques, and state and national efforts. The articles include: (1) "Beyond Decoding: Literacy and Libraries--Introduction" (Amy Spaulding); (2) "Libraries: Natural Centers for Literacy" (Jacqueline Cook); (3) "Kids Who Read Can Succeed" (Richard M. Dougherty) (4) "A New Era of Achievement" (Bernice MacDonald); (5) "A Personal Perspective on Literacy Outreach" (Mattye L. Nelson); (6) "New Readers in Brooklyn Break Out of Isolation" (Deborah Ruth) (7) "The National Literacy Act: What Librarians Should Know" (Barbara Humes); (8) "Maintaining a Balance to Serve Learners" (Mildred Dotson); (9) "Encouraging Reflective Learning Through Reading, Writing and Assessment: A Program's Journey" (Diane J. Rosenthal); (10) "Learning Styles and Literacy" (Joan Glasner and Joanne Ingham); (11) "Library and Information Science Education Literacy Update" (Patricia E. Feehan); (12) "School Library Media Programs and Family Literacy: Opportunities and Obstacles" (Eleanor R. Kulleseid); (13) "The Importance of Men As Role Models in Literacy" (Sara Willoughby-Herb and Steven L. Herb); (14) The Past, Present, and the Promise of Family Literacy" (Meta Potts); (15) "A Strong Record: NYLA (New York Library Association) and Literacy" (Therese L. Broderick); (16) "Onondaga Reaches Out" (Bruce E. Daniels, Sari Feldman, and Milena M. Hansen) (17) "Building Communities of Learners in Library Literacy Programs" (Roger Dovner); (18) "Literacy Services in Rural Libraries" (Leona Salzman); (19) "America's Silent Scandal: Adult Illiteracy" (Richard C. Wade); (20) "Literacy as Part of the Library Mission" (Jerry Nichols); (21) "New Readers Write" (Mamie Chow, Don Chiapetta, Mary Hall, Diane Francis, Beaddie Anderson, and Enrique Luis Ramirez). (KRN)

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# The Bookmark

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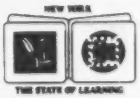


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# The Bookmark

## BEYOND DECODING: LITERACY AND LIBRARIES

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**Editors**
Joseph F. Shubert and
E. J. Josey

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NEW YORK STATE LIBRARY

## CONTENTS

186 Beyond Decoding: Literacy and Libraries — Introduction *By Amy Spaulding*

190 Libraries: Natural Centers for Literacy *By Jacqueline Cook*

192 Kids Who Read Can Succeed *By Richard M. Dougherty*

197 A New Era of Achievement *By Bernice MacDonald*

201 A Personal Perspective on Literacy Outreach *By Mattye L. Nelson*

204 New Readers in Brooklyn Break Out of Isolation *By Deborah Ruth*

206 The National Literacy Act: What Librarians Should Know *By Barbara Humes*

209 Maintaining a Balance to Serve Learners *By Mildred Dotson*

213 Encouraging Reflective Learning Through Reading, Writing and Assessment: A Program's Journey *By Diane J. Rosenthal*

218 Learning Styles and Literacy *By Joan Glasner and Joanne Ingham*

223 Library and Information Science Education Literacy Update *By Patricia E. Feehan*

227 School Library Media Programs and Family Literacy: Opportunities and Obstacles *By Eleanor R. Kulleseid*

231 The Importance of Men As Role Models in Literacy *By Sara J. Willoughby-Herb and Steven L. Herb*

236 The Past, Present, and the Promise of Family Literacy *By Meta Potts*

239 A Strong Record: NYLA and Literacy *By Therese L. Broderick*

243 Onondaga Reaches Out *By Bruce E. Daniels, Sari Feldman and Milena M. Hansen*

245 Building Communities of Learners in Library Literacy Programs *By Roger Dovner*

250 Literacy Services in Rural Libraries *By Leona Salzman*

**Center Section**

America's Silent Scandal: Adult Illiteracy *By Richard C. Wade*

Literacy as Part of the Library Mission *By Jerry Nichols*

New Readers Write: *Mamie Chow, Don Chiapetta, Mary Hall, Diane Francis, Beaddie Anderson and Enrique Luis Ramirez*

**Briefer Information:** *American Library Association Best of the Best for Children*, 252; Notes on Adult Illiteracy, 253

# BEYOND DECODING: LITERACY AND LIBRARIES

*An Introduction by Amy Spaulding, Issue Editor*

The issue of literacy was a focal point of both the 1990 New York State Governor's and 1991 White House Conferences on Library and Information Services. The urgent need to address the public problems of adult illiteracy grows ever clearer, but equally essential is the need to remain aware of the human dimensions of the predicament. Society must deal with illiteracy's effect on social relations, the quality of community life and the economy, but the individual with poor reading and writing skills must get around serious problems every single day of life and often is prevented from fully participating in today's world.

Long ago, America pioneered the idea of universal education to empower all its citizens with literacy, and libraries have been a cornerstone of that idea. Now, however, this ideal is in trouble, for we have many people coming to America from areas where literacy is not common, and even more people who were born here and yet, for a variety of reasons, became adults unable to read. Libraries have long supported adult literacy, but society has reached a stage when it must quicken its pace in finding answers and the library's role must become larger.

The Summer 1985 issue of *The Bookmark*, "Literacy and Libraries," proved influential in discussions and program planning for library-based literacy programs in New York State and beyond. More recently, the "Conference Briefs" issue (Winter 1990) included Helen Huguenor Lyman's comprehensive article, "Libraries, Literacy and the Information Society," and the Spring 1991 issue included the "Information Literacy" policy report of the American Library Association's 1989 Presidential Committee on Information Literacy.

## MUCH HAS CHANGED

Looking at library literacy services in 1992, we find that much has changed over the last seven years. Among these changes are the growth of the problem of adult illiteracy, the urgent demands of an information society, new ways in which adult learners are taking responsibility for their learning and a growing understanding that becoming literate is more than learning to decode symbols. This issue of *The Bookmark* examines these changes and looks ahead to literacy and libraries in the year 2002. Bernice MacDonald speaks of the history of adult literacy training in libraries, while several other writers, including Mattye Nelson and Joan Glasner, talk of what the library has learned about literacy learning and how the library can share this with other agencies working in the field. Other articles in this issue examine mission and role from several points of view, including those of adult learners, and still others describe how libraries are providing and supporting services important to new readers and to their teachers. *The Bookmark* is happy to welcome trustees, educators and public policymakers, in addition to its usual audience, as we share our concern for this important topic.

Current statistics on literacy are terrifying, and they show that the situation is becoming worse. Many authorities now say that one-fifth of America's adult population reads at less than an eighth-grade level. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that over 23,000,000 Americans read at below the fourth grade level. The problem crosses all geographical and ethnic boundaries. To those of us who love reading, this seems very sad, but it is not just sad for the individuals concerned, it is tragic for our whole society. People today need to read in order to function in today's society. Not too long ago, a person could survive fairly comfortably with an eighth-grade reading level, as a farmer, a housewife, or a factory worker. Now, everyone must be able to read labels (the antidote printed on a can of kitchen cleanser, for example, assumes ninth-grade competence), to fill out income tax forms (10th grade), or to study manuals for the electronic equipment that is replacing manual equipment (which required hand-eye coordination rather than reading skill).

A few years ago, the New York Telephone Company had to interview 90,000 people in order to find 2,000 who could fill a job category that required less than high school reading skills. Where are those other 88,000 finding jobs, and who will support them if they do not? It is clear that a large proportion of the prison population is illiterate, and there are many more nonreading individuals who are responsible people struggling to support families and function in society. A democracy simply cannot afford a society split into a literate upper class and a permanent nonreading underclass.

For decades, pundits promised the demise of libraries and written material and predicted the start of a paperless society, but reality has proved very different. Yes, many people enjoy videos and recordings — but they come to the library for information and recreation in all

its forms. Yes, video screens are crucial for information transfer — but much of that information is transmitted in the form of text. Yes, there are robots that have been developed to do manual tasks — but someone has to read the instruction manual and program them. The truth of the matter is that people today need better reading skills and yet the number of people with poor reading skills is growing.

*Libraries and literacy are intertwined.*

What has all this to do with libraries, the sanctuary of readers? Libraries and literacy are intertwined. This sounds simplistic, but the implications are far-reaching. Libraries need a literate population in order to exist, so it is worth their while to help those who need support with reading and writing. At the same time, the quantity and swift pace of publication is such that no single individual can afford to buy all the materials he or she needs. This bond between libraries and self-educating learners has been true since the days of the mechanics' and apprentices' libraries. Recently, libraries have become very active again in supporting adults learning to read. With little money, they have set up volunteer programs and they have learned much — they now find themselves overwhelmed with the demand for their services. Since the public looks upon the library as a symbol of literacy and its users as "smart" people, it also sees the library as a good place to improve one's reading and writing skills. The library is finding itself a leader in literacy, both locally and nationally, and is ready to expand on its strengths.

In the eyes of an adult who is learning to read, the library has an advantage over the schools. It was built for adults as well as children and is not associated with early frustration and failure. This makes me think of a well-educated, successful friend who had trouble learning to read. When the nun announced that she would have to repeat first grade, my friend's mother and aunt developed a method for tutoring her. The aunt held up flash cards and the mother pulled her hair at each wrong answer. It worked, but my friend admits that it took a long time to overcome her dislike of books. This story horrifies me, but what if she had accepted failure in the first grade? What if her mother had also had trouble reading and couldn't "help"? Knowing my friend as an adult, I would guess that the shame of being in a place for children would keep her away from a school, but she might have gone to a library to improve her reading skills. Don Chiappetta's story tells of a middle class child who did accept reading failure as a young child and later found an answer at the library.

THE LIBRARY IS SOCIALLY NEUTRAL

The library has another advantage in its reputation for being socially neutral. This is more important than many of us recognize. One of the biggest stumbling blocks in education is the perception, often accurate, that teachers represent their own mainstream cultural and social values and have little respect for those of the learners. If a student, who already has doubts about his ability, feels that becoming a reader means betraying his social background, resistance is going to be high because the perceived cost in identity is so enormous to an already shaky self-esteem.

Those of us who are readers understand that decoding is only the first step, that interpreting what is said and deciding whether or not you agree is the important part of reading. This is a lesson we learn as we go along, but it is not taught along with decoding skills, and unsophisticated nonreaders tend to believe they are expected to swallow what is there "in black and white." One theorist says that each act of reading is unique, that, just as the writer brings his personal experience to his writing, so each reader brings hers, thus no two readings can be the same.[1] Take, for example, *Animal Farm*.[2] Educated, "literate" adults know that Orwell was satirizing communism with his "some pigs are more equal than others." I had a graduate student, however, who told me that she had read that book in junior high school and its message had changed her life. She was going to a new school and felt very conspicuous because hardly anyone else had dark skin, and here was a book making fun of people who had a false sense of superiority. She knew that book was about racism; for her, it was. Now, having heard her story, my experience of the book is changed.

*Decoding is only the first step. Interpreting what is said and deciding whether or not you agree is the important part of reading.*

This right to read one's own truth in a book is an important concept to the literacy learner, who often has a great deal of life experience, if not literary background. Literacy education must include the critical skills necessary to judge writing and the awareness of each reader's right and responsibility to do so. This is part of true literacy. Libraries, with their wide range of subjects and writers, try hard to include material reflecting the cultures of all their users and can provide an atmosphere that allows new readers to feel at home in the culture they

already know and a welcome guest in whatever new ones they care to explore and share. Libraries aim at including everyone, not at exclusivity.

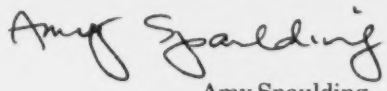
Libraries in areas of high immigrant populations try to have collections of materials in the native languages of the people in their community and to hold programs representing the cultures of these peoples. This atmosphere makes public libraries particularly comfortable for foreign-born people seeking literacy in English as a second language and makes the transition to bilingualism a little more manageable. Similarly, collections that include books among other forms of entertainment and information transfer provide a context that seems to respect learners who are interested even if they are not yet good readers.

## THE "INTELLECTUAL HEIRLOOM"

One of the most effective approaches in the fight for universal literacy has been the intergenerational family program. Caring parents who have known the pain of poor reading skills are usually very anxious to help their children, and this can strongly motivate seeking literacy training. More importantly, as Meta Potts explains, literacy is a kind of "intellectual heirloom" passed as a loving gift from parent to child. Indeed, statistics show that the education level of the mother is a critical factor in a child's success with reading. It is being read to, and watching reading being modelled, that make the difference. The topic of modelling always brings to my mind an image from the New York City subway: I once glanced at an old woman as she sat reading a Chinese newspaper and idly wondered what it was like to read characters rather than letters. Then I looked at her grandson in his stroller; at 18 months he was sitting there struggling to hold a section of newspaper and shifting his eyes across the paper between peeks at his grandmother. He did not understand what it was about, but he knew that there was meaning in that paper and that the behavior was important. She happened to look up and we shared a smile, for we both knew that here was a baby who was going to be a reader.

The library is a prime location for family literacy programs. It has the children's collections and librarians who respect a book for its ability to inform and communicate, not just for the author's brilliance and erudition. Also, children's librarians often have reading-aloud programs for parents and children, which means that families can share a favorite story with no distinction between those who read easily and those who do not. Whole language, which is becoming fashionable in education, is based on the sound principle that has always been the basis of children's libraries: one must find books welcoming and appealing in order to become a reader. This is true, regardless of the age of the person learning to read, and it requires becoming comfortable with written materials. Growing used to the literary language of books, which is so different from that of everyday speech, by hearing it read aloud, is an important step in this process.

Finally, the neutrality of the library makes it a comfortable place for volunteers, who often enjoy an environment that offers materials they want to read themselves as well as supportive tutoring materials. How wonderful, if someone is tutoring a fellow fisherman, to share a manual on fly-tying or a video on fishing, or for tutor and a group of learners to share their expertise over a cookbook from a student's native cuisine. Learning can be a pleasurable experience, and, if it can be done with enjoyment, why not? Literacy is not just learning to decode letters and words, it is becoming a user of print — for jobs, for learning and for just plain entertainment. Libraries are committed to books and stand for the belief that knowledge is to be shared; it is one of the best gifts, for in being given it is multiplied, not diminished.



Amy Spaulding
Guest Editor

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2 Orwell, George, *Animal Farm*, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1954.



**Amy Spaulding** *is the coordinator of the Long Island University Palmer School of Library and Information Science Program at the New School for Social Research. Until recently, Dr. Spaulding was Associate Professor in the Division of Library and Information Science at St. John's University. She chaired the 1992 St. John's University Congress for Librarians, "Literacy, the Library and the Family."*

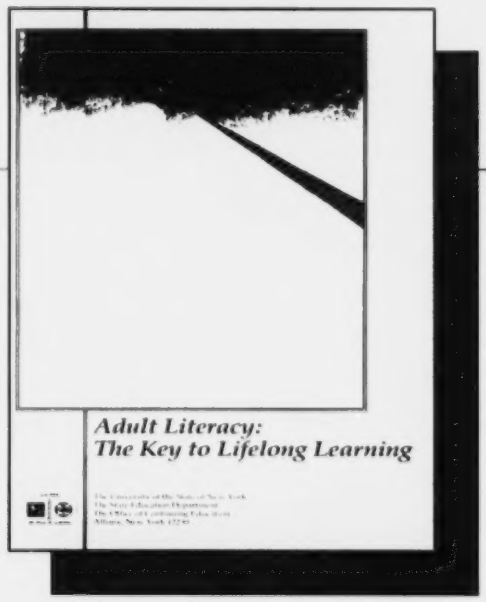
**The President and the governors** have set as one of six education goals to be achieved by the year 2000, the elimination of adult illiteracy in the United States. The 1990 New York State Governor's Conference on Library and Information Services and the 1991 White House Conference showed that a literate America is needed to achieve national goals. As Professor Wade and other authors in this issue of *The Bookmark* point out, nearly every social problem in our society today is complicated by illiteracy. Amy Spaulding, with the help of distinguished librarians, teachers, researchers and new readers, has provided an issue of *The Bookmark* that looks beyond the decoding level of literacy.

In the Summer 1992 issue of *The Bookmark* ("1992 Perspectives"), we will present the May 1992 report of the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries, which focusses upon a vision of information literacy.

During the White House Conference on Library and Information Services, Congress passed the landmark "National Literacy Act." In 1991, the Regents issued *Adult Literacy: The Key to Lifelong Learning* and proposed legislation that will help public libraries secure State funds to support and expand adult literacy services. For the first time, this legislation (S. 7890, introduced in 1992 by Senator Jess Present, Chair of the Senate Education Committee) specifically recognizes the several roles of libraries in adult literacy. It would make libraries eligible for aid both for actual instruction and for important, but often unrecognized, support services that make it possible for other literacy providers to serve their students. The Legislature and Governor also, in 1992, provide in library aid $83,500 for library adult literacy programs. See pages 206-208 for information on how libraries and library systems will be providing services as a result of this program.

Adult literacy is one of the objectives of *A New Compact for Learning*; in the spirit of that program, we are proud to provide this issue of *The Bookmark*.

Joseph F. Shubert
Editor



# LIBRARIES: NATURAL CENTERS FOR LITERACY

*By Jacqueline Cook*

New York City is proud of its literacy programs, because they offer quality services to adults seeking to improve their basic reading, writing and English-language skills. Our experience in New York City is illustrative of many of the contributions libraries across the country make in promoting and developing literacy for all adults. A unique feature of the City's effort is its utilization of a broad range of institutions to provide literacy services: community-based organizations (operating through the Community Development Agency), the City University of New York, the New York City Public Schools and the three public libraries — Brooklyn Public Library, The New York Public Library and Queens Borough Public Library. Each agency has its own history, distinct philosophy and program design and, thus, a unique program environment and community of learners.

We see libraries as a natural partner in the effort to expand literacy for adults. For very recent immigrants and other adult learners, libraries have always been viewed as a source for reading materials and information on community services. Recently, libraries have built on this relationship with the community, sharpened their focus on adult literacy and expanded their capacity by opening literacy centers. Library literacy programs are unique because of their tie to a wide range of library materials, the support they provide to other literacy programs in the area, and their strong connections with the surrounding community.

At the heart of library literacy services are the adults who receive literacy instruction by attending one of the literacy centers at branch libraries located throughout the City. More than 3,500 adults are served each year through individual and small group tutorial sessions and classes. Thousands of others work independently at computers, attend conversation groups or use study tables.

A formidable barrier to the development of literacy skills is limited access to appropriate reading materials. Libraries play a vital and unique role in overcoming this barrier. Library literacy centers provide a wealth of computers, audio, video and print materials to be used by program participants and other literacy learners and professionals in the community. The literacy centers are open for adults who are independent learners and those who want to supplement their instructional programs. A unique feature of several libraries is their capacity to loan a circulating collection of literacy materials to enrich the instructional resources available to neighboring literacy programs. These "deposit collections" may provide a class with multiple copies of a book for group work or provide a range of titles for broader individual selection.

Libraries contribute to the development of the adult education field as librarians join their literacy colleagues in the pursuit of excellence in literacy services. Certain libraries have led the literacy community in exploring the connections between reading and writing; others are known for their commitment to involving adult learners and tutors in a wide range of program functions, including tutor training, and have long-standing student councils, which serve as the primary vehicle for organizing around learners' concerns and interests. Additionally, library literacy workers are frequent partners in city-wide committees to examine assessment, efforts that promote quality literacy services and respond to the needs of literacy learners and workers.

But beyond their capacity to provide literacy instruction and join in city-wide literacy efforts, libraries play an additional, unique role of which I was reminded recently when I attended a library's annual Tribute to Tutors. A strong feature of library literacy programs is their use of volunteers. I recall that as I left the office for the literacy celebration, a colleague, who was curious about tutoring programs, wanted to know how much tutors are paid. She was amazed to hear that tutors work as volunteers and even more astonished to learn that they typically donate four hours a week for months, and sometimes years, to work with a group of adults learning to read and write.

*Libraries are an important, unique and natural resource for developing a more literate society.*

At the Tribute to Tutors, I was as impressed as my coworker when I learned that volunteers were being honored that evening for their contribution of over 1,000 hours and that at least one of the tutors had been volunteering for more than 10 years. But what struck me

most, as I looked around that room filled with volunteer tutors and adult students, was the way a library program can become integrated with the community. Many volunteer programs struggle to attract volunteers and adult learners from the same community, but library programs, situated in the community itself, are uniquely successful. Thus, library programs have literacy learners and volunteer tutors who are of the same race and ethnicity and share similar backgrounds and experiences, which can be a great aid in their learning experience.

As I spoke to well over 200 people who had crowded into the church basement for the celebration, I offered words of congratulation and appreciation to the tutors and public libraries. I talked about the important and unique contributions libraries make to the literacy community — their literacy services for adult learners, their invaluable expertise, their partnership with other literacy providers and their role in supporting adult learners and in helping to build our neighborhoods.

One of the adult learners, Mildred Jamison, who spoke the night of the Tribute to Tutors, eloquently described the importance of libraries to literacy when she thanked the library and her tutor by describing her own personal development and accomplishments. She talked about her struggle to write in her journal:

> "At first my head hurt. What do they mean 'write'? And how can I write when my head hurts so much? But then I find it's past 12 o'clock and I'm writing. The more and more I write, I write better and better and better."

Libraries have helped Ms. Jamison reach her goals and have helped many other adults develop skills to enhance their lives as family members, workers, members of their communities and citizens. Libraries are an important, unique and natural resource for developing a more literate society, and the literacy community in New York City is proud to have libraries as partners.

---

**Jacqueline Cook** *is Director of the New York City Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy, where she is responsible for formulating city policy and managing funding for adult literacy. Ms. Cook has been involved in literacy education for 20 years, serving as educator, consultant, speaker and agency director. With expertise in literacy programming, training, research and policy, Ms. Cook has spearheaded support for the enactment of literacy legislation at the local and national levels.*

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# KIDS WHO READ CAN SUCCEED*

*By Richard M. Dougherty*

How far away is Riyadh? Before the days and nights of Operation Desert Storm, some might have replied, "Riyadh? Never heard of it. Isn't that near Madagascar?" Now we all know it's a city in Saudi Arabia where palm trees, Mercedes sedans and television news reporters all got fed and watered. Today, you might be inclined to reply, "Riyadh? It's as far away as my television set. It's as far away as CNN."

Today, the meaning of "far" can be defined in many ways. It can mean miles on a map. Or hours on a jet. Or minutes by missile. Do I want to visit somewhere there, or do I simply need to talk to them?

Could I send a fax? If a fax or a phone call will do, Riyadh is only as far away as my touch-tone dial — three-digit country code (966), one digit for the Riyadh code (1) and seven digits for the number of the person I'm trying to reach there. Fourteen finger taps and I'm in Riyadh. That's how far it is. Distance, today, is a relative term and often a shrinking one. But how about information, let's say, about selling pizza in Riyadh? Suppose I came to you and wanted to know about the chances for trading with Saudi Arabia. The possible sources of answers to that question are growing in number, almost by the minute.

Recently a community official asked me about the available information about U.S. trade with Saudi Arabia. Out of curiosity, I asked a reference librarian friend to help me locate possible information about U.S. trade policy with Saudi Arabia. We retrieved over 20,000 hits from more than 75 databases! And that was *without* checking the Foreign Trade Reports, the International Trade Administration documents, the Overseas Business reports, the Foreign Economic Trends of the Department of Commerce, the Economic Bulletin Board reports, the documents of the State Department, the Washington Press Text service or the...well, you see what I mean.

While distances are shrinking, information and information sources are exploding. Now here's another question: How far away is downtown Detroit? For many people living in today's urban centers like Detroit, the answer might as well be, "a million miles away." If you can't read and you don't have a job (or maybe even a place to live), and you're drug-dependent, where do you show up on our map? What is your connection with our worlds of exploding information and shrinking distances? In many ways, your isolation may actually be as great as that of a remote third world villager. Your alienation even greater because you can see the affluence surrounding you. The growing tragedies of our inner cities — the poverty of children, inferior public schools, joblessness, drug use, violence, broken families — all are evidence of the price we are already paying for our failures.

If current trends continue, we could eventually become a nation of city/state governments, with pockets of urban despair locked off from the rest of the country — sort of a reverse version of the city/state governments of the Renaissance Italy. I find such a prospect repugnant — not only does it run counter to our most fundamental ideals of equality and justice, it poses a very real threat to the well-being of our entire society.

Given the disconnection, the alienation of our inner cities — and a seeming absence of national will to mobilize the resources needed to change this picture — a grim prophesy attributed to Dennis Hopper takes a special meaning: "The nineties," he suggests, "could make the sixties look like the fifties." Can we do anything to change this picture? Is there any hope at all? I believe there is, but only if we see the world clearly, only if we understand fully the factors that expand the distances between us and those that can bring us closer together. One of the things we must recognize clearly is that information — more than ever in the past — is one of our most valuable resources.

America's greatness has always derived from ideas — from grand ideas like those embodied in our Constitution to life-saving ideas like the polio vaccine, from ideas as mundane as the zipper and Velcro to those as forward-looking as Voyager and the space shuttle. Ideas are the only thing that will continue to make us great in the future — and in this competitive age, we need as large an "idea base" as we can get. Whether we realize it or not, we are mortgaging our future; we are allowing our "idea base" to erode. How will our next generation compete in an information society if it is a generation that can neither read or write? That's bad news, but there is good news as well.

The good news is this: for those who *can* read, their access to information — and the potential for new ideas that such information generates — is about to explode.

* Based on a presentation at the 1992 St. John's University Congress for Librarians, "Literacy, the Library and the Family."

Today we are on the threshold of a truly astounding development: an *electronic highway system*, a revolutionary new computer network for sending and receiving information around the country and around the world. This "highway of the mind" is going to alter our ways of living and doing business no less dramatically than did the interstate highway system more than 30 years ago.

*Illiteracy means personal pain, lost opportunity. Illiteracy means hopelessness and the social ills bred in a climate of hopelessness. Illiteracy means reduced national productivity and loss of international competitiveness. Illiteracy means people who don't vote, who don't get involved in the nation's political processes, who feel disenfranchised, who feel like outsiders.*

Imagine a school kid in Copper Harbor, Michigan, (an isolated community that juts out into Lake Superior) doing a homework assignment on dinosaurs. In the past, students living in such a small, isolated village might have access to a small set of encyclopedias, probably out of date, and maybe a small collection of books. But imagine him sitting down at the computer in his home, school or library, and plugging into the national electronic highway system. He will have a reservoir of the world's knowledge literally at his fingertips. This highway of ideas and information is not a dream, not a wild fantasy for the 21st century. Thousands of electronic networks already exist. It's just a question of what the Big One is going to look like.

Can you imagine a society in which every literate citizen has such extraordinary access to information? Given this potential for grass roots access, it's not surprising that "literacy" is a word with new meaning and new social urgency for the coming years. For librarians, this development may be of no less significance than the invention of moveable type in the 1400s. Soon, we will have the ability to move entire documents — entire libraries — almost at the speed of light!! It is not difficult to see the implications of a networked society for economic development, educational development, for a whole new world — a world as strikingly different from today's world of isolated personal computers as our superhighway system is for the narrow country lanes of the "Model T Era."

## LIBRARIES CAN BE ISOLATED AND INVISIBLE

I know this world may seem far removed from many of you and I can understand why. Fewer than one-half of the school media centers in many states have telephones. Recently, a young school librarian from Cape May, New Jersey, while driving me back to the airport following a speaking engagement, volunteered, "It's hard for me to identify with what you're talking about. I have to bring my own computer to school for the kids to use — our library doesn't have a single computer. We're still in the Dark Ages compared to what you're talking about."

Many of our colleagues are laboring under similar circumstances. But, the future health of our society demands that we be aware, that we be ready for this new development before it is actually upon us. We must act in spite of the sad fact that teachers and librarians in many communities must still lug their own PCs to school for the kids to use. For librarians, this coming "highway of the mind" is an opportunity unlike any opportunity we will ever have again — the chance to become *the* information transfer experts of this era. It is an extraordinary opportunity for librarians such as yourself to ensure that our citizens have full access to this new resource.

Why do I think we can play a key role in this information revolution? Because we know more about how to organize, retrieve and share information than any other profession. And, we can point to a tradition of serving. It is our job to remind the world of our expertise, to assume leading roles in educating our communities about the coming electronic and educational development and to contribute our own ideas to the design and development of networks and networked information sources. It is our job to inform our communities to ensure that they are ready to link schools, libraries and, yes, individual citizens into the network when it becomes available. But even more importantly, we must make sure that our communities have *access* to these electronic superhighways. There are no guarantees that access *will* be made available. It's going to take energy on our part. We librarians face a special personal challenge. We've often been more comfortable with a social position not unlike that of Harvey the Rabbit, which is to say "invisible."

We hear a lot of talk these days about literacy, but do we hear librarians mentioned as part of the solution? We know we're contributing to the welfare of the communi-

ties, but when we listen for a chorus of approval and appreciation out there, do we hear much clapping? We got one, tiny mention in the recent Governors' Recommendations on Literacy. We were not even mentioned in the seminal Nation at Risk report.

Yes, I'm afraid "invisibility" is the right word. If this is the Age of Information and librarians are the best information managers around, why is it that so few people seem to remember that we exist? Maybe, it's because we have been too modest about our accomplishments; we haven't yelled loudly enough. We haven't stood up and told the world that we aren't part of the problem — libraries and librarians are part of the solution. Libraries are quiet places, and librarians are quiet people. But maybe it turns out that we have been just a little too quiet.

Librarians know we have much to offer, but does anybody else know? Have we told them? This much I know for sure: nobody gives time, money and responsibility to somebody he hardly knows is there.

I'd like to see us yell more loudly, for instance, about the President's goals for education:

- a national high school graduation rate of 90 percent;
- U.S. students first in the world in math and science achievement;
- every adult American literate;
- every school free of drugs; and
- all students leaving grades 4, 8 and 12 demonstrating competency in English, math, science, history and geography.

According to the President, all this — and more — is supposed to happen in the next nine years. But how can any of this happen if our kids *can't read?* The President talks about "school readiness" and "parents as equal partners in children's learning," but unless our kids can *read*, we're *not* going to be *first* in science and math. In fact, we're not going to be second, third or fourth either!

I fervently hope that our next President, whether he be George Bush or Bill Clinton, will provide the leadership our country so desperately seeks. I would be delighted to have any President earn the mantle of "Education President." We need to create what President Bush calls "better and more accountable schools." I know that in such environments more American children would become better readers. If our President is serious about education, he shouldn't overlook librarians as allies. And all of us must not overlook this enormous opportunity to participate in an enlarged national education effort. Reading programs for young children; information services for school children, adults and small businesses; adult literacy programs — all of these are areas in which librarians can offer experience, expertise, and enthusiasm. Certainly, there's no group that cares more deeply about literacy. Our life's work, after all, is built upon a base of literacy, of literature. An illiterate society has no use for librarians.

But what if people can't read? So what? Does it really matter? Can't they watch TV? If you try to imagine a society in which no one can read, you quickly realize how devastated our culture and our lives would be — and how devastating life is today for many people who can't read. Illiteracy means personal pain, lost opportunity. Illiteracy means hopelessness and the social ills bred in a climate of hopelessness. Illiteracy means reduced national productivity and loss of international competitiveness. Illiteracy means people who don't vote, who don't get involved in the nation's political processes, who feel disenfranchised, who feel like outsiders.

Aside from the bare essentials to ensure human existence — food, shelter and safety — there is nothing more important for achieving success than the ability to read. Now, if all these things are true, if *illiteracy* is truly a matter of *national* importance, then it should naturally follow that *librarians* are people of *national* importance, too.

## WHAT WE MUST DO

Up to this point, however, we haven't done a very good job of making that most obvious of connections — that librarians have a critical role to play in meeting America's literacy challenge. And because we have been so quiet, so polite, for so long, nobody else seems to remember that books and reading and information and libraries and literacy all go together — *always have*! Obviously, we have to make a *little more noise*. We must all speak out more loudly. We must make noise about the principles that we hold dear. This must be done even if we are quiet by nature. We must compete for our share of media sound bites. We must tell our story. We must *rally for America's libraries*. Libraries are worth it!

We must become more active, even if we insist on believing that we are "just librarians" who "belong in the library." The luxury of such isolation simply no longer exists. Information is today's "gold" and any librarian who refuses to recognize this fact is going to get trampled in the rush. Who should have access to that "gold?" Just the wealthy? Just the powerful? Only those people who can become computer-literate on their own? Librarians — and all citizens — must address these issues today or somebody else is going to do it for us.

Librarians have a very special responsibility. Why? Because we, perhaps more clearly than anybody, understand the power of information. We know the broad uses to which it can be put and the ways in which it builds and strengthens our democratic system. We know how information contributes to national productivity and how it

will keep us competitive in the world. Collectively, we must become advocates for a literate America and for all that means to our nation's future. We *must* speak up for literacy — literacy for adults and reading development for children.

I can now reflect on my year as President of the American Library Association. One of my lasting visions is of community officials rallying to the support of their libraries. Community officials like libraries, even if they aren't "true" supporters. Libraries symbolize the best of what our communities can offer. Let's not forget — unlike many agencies, libraries work and they are cheap. They are a bargain at the price. We are taking about the price of one meal for a family of four at McDonald's. That's what the typical library costs a citizen. A bargain? You bet!

I left the Presidency more conscious that ever of the power possessed by politicians. They have the power to put *our* money where our mouths are, to turn our dreams into reality. It is an old but an enduring fact that children are not among the legally enfranchised. Kids can't vote! And so those of us who can vote and who care about them must act on their behalf.

*we* do in our communities — whether we reside in Carlsbad, New York City, Baton Rouge, Sioux City or, yes, even Copper Harbor, Michigan — to ensure that our community libraries remain mainstream information providers?

First, we must educate ourselves about the changing landscape of information and ideas. We must understand how a national "highway of the mind" is going to shape the future.

Second, we must inform other community members and leaders as to what is at stake. They must understand what contributions librarians are making to the quality of life in their communities.

Third, we must show how libraries fit in and why academic, public and school libraries, along with other community agencies, are well-suited to serve as gateways to a national electronic highway in the future. We must show how libraries are already well-positioned to assist in the nation's literacy efforts.

Fourth, we must enter the discussion about the national education goals *now*. We must demonstrate to legislators, government officials and other interested parties that our ideas and experiences are relevant to this discussion.

*We must become advocates for a literate America and for all that means to our nation's future. We must speak up for literacy — literacy for adults and reading development for children.*

We must change the minds of legislators who support only those expenditures that bring them immediate pay backs in constituent loyalty, who shelve fiscally smart programs for kids because they take too long to show results, who would deny a kid a few thousand in education funds now, even if they know that the cost of supporting that same kid later in prison will be $25,000 a year or more. I'm not a politician, but I'm convinced that all of us must become more politically aware, more politically active. There isn't choice if we and society are to achieve our goals.

Librarians are "idea" people. Our professional experience has shown us, over and over again, the power of ideas. I hope that librarians will be among those who will lobby with passion and dedication for a future of *hope*, a future of promise and meaning for *all* Americans. Hope is so important! Let us never forget that a kid living in an inner city slum, who can't read, has no hope of participating in what our society can offer. With no hope, think of the implications.

Now, do I believe we have a role to play in building a stronger, happier, more productive America? We not only have a role, we should have a *central* role. But we have to claim it, to commit to it, to demand it. What can

But to accomplish all of this, all of us will have to make noise. We must be willing to fight for our principles. Otherwise libraries and librarians will remain that invisible, underutilized resource that we have too often been in the past.

Many years of hard work will be needed to achieve our national education goals. But their value to our society, I believe, makes the struggle and our commitment to participate mandatory. Let us keep firmly in mind, as information professionals, that our task today is to speak up, to lay claim to our territory, to bring our strengths and our talents to the tasks at hand:

- until every child in America can read and read well;
- until every adult has enough information literacy to be employable at a life-supporting wage;
- until every business and industry is assured access to the information needed to be competitive, to be efficient, to be productive;
- until every American has truly achieved freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of religion and freedom of speech;

- until all of these goals have been attained, we will not have achieved our ultimate aims.

I'm confident that all of us in this room have a vital role to play in the building of a better, stronger, more competitive America — an America of great ideas. It's up to us — to you — to seize the opportunities.

**Richard M. Dougherty** *is Professor at the School of Information and Library Studies, at the University of Michigan. As President of the American Library Association in 1990-91, he made "Kids Who Read Can Succeed" the theme of his leadership. This article is based on Dr. Dougherty's talk at St. John's University in February 1992.*

**ERNESTINE ROSE — BRIDGING THE GULF**

In preparing a talk on public library objectives this spring, I decided to re-read *The Public Library in American Life* by Ernestine Rose, a distinguished librarian and educator who graduated from the New York State Library School in Albany in 1904. In the course of searching for that book (published by Columbia University Press in 1954) in the State Library's catalog, I came across a citation to Ms. Rose's 1917 pamphlet, *Bridging the Gulf: Work with the Russian Jews and Other Newcomers*, describing her experiences as a librarian at the Seward Park Branch of The New York Public Library.

Ms. Rose's work as librarian of the 135th Street Branch from 1920 to 1942 is described by Betty L. Jenkins in "A White Librarian in Black Harlem" in the July 1990 issue of *Library Quarterly*. She points out that Ms. Rose "galvanized the resources of the community and applied the prestige of the New York Public Library to plan, execute, and promote library services at a time when blacks were moving in large numbers to New York after World War I" and that under her leadership, the branch became a model of public library services in the midst of the Harlem Renaissance. At the time of her death in 1961, the *Wilson Library Bulletin* said she was best known for the major part she played in the origin and development of the Countee Cullen Regional Branch and in bringing the Arthur A. Schomburg Collection into the Library system.

Rose served in Army hospital libraries in both World Wars and taught at several library schools. She exercised her leadership in American Library Association committees dealing with what we now call "outreach." I hope that readers of *The Bookmark* will enjoy excerpts from *Bridging the Gulf* that appear on pages 198-199. — *Joseph F. Shubert*

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# A NEW ERA OF ACHIEVEMENT

*By Bernice MacDonald*

Join me, if you will, in a look backward to the year 1965, when, for the first time, the American Library Association (ALA) surveyed literacy activities in public libraries. I was the investigator for that study.

It was a time when public libraries were first awakening to the possibilities of broadening their services to reach the adult illiterate. John Kenneth Galbraith's *Affluent Society* and Michael Harrington's *The Other America* had stirred the nation to the idea of wiping out poverty and giving new opportunities to minorities and the unskilled. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1963 created a milestone in literacy education. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Library Services and Construction Act of 1964 and the Adult Education Act of 1966 added further momentum to the cause.

This new support had revitalized a national effort in adult literacy.

Historically, the American public library had adopted the role of participant in the education of the adult. As early as 1924, ALA formed a Commission on Library and Adult Education. Outreach work with the foreign born reached back to the beginning of the century in large urban libraries such as The New York Public Library. The record of the 1920s through the 1950s shows Americanization programs in most port cities and work with the unemployed in the 1930s, the returning servicemen and women in the 1940s and the independent learner in the 1950s.

As Federal funds began to be directed to the disadvantaged population in the 1960s, the public library responded with services to ethnic groups in ghetto areas, not altogether different from outreach programs early in the century. The Americanization process, however, was of much less concern in the 1960s, and there was a new awareness and focus on the native-born illiterate both in cities and rural areas.

## WHY WAS 1965 IMPORTANT?

Although native illiteracy had always existed in American society, large events such as the Great Depression, the draft of undereducated service men in World War II and the growth of urban ghettos made the problem more visible. Interest in illiteracy peaked during these large societal upheavals, then subsided. But, in the 1960s, attention began to hold, and, for the first time, significant legislation was enacted. The method of counting illiterates was refined, and clearer definitions of the terms "illiterate" and "functional illiterate" were brought into wide use.

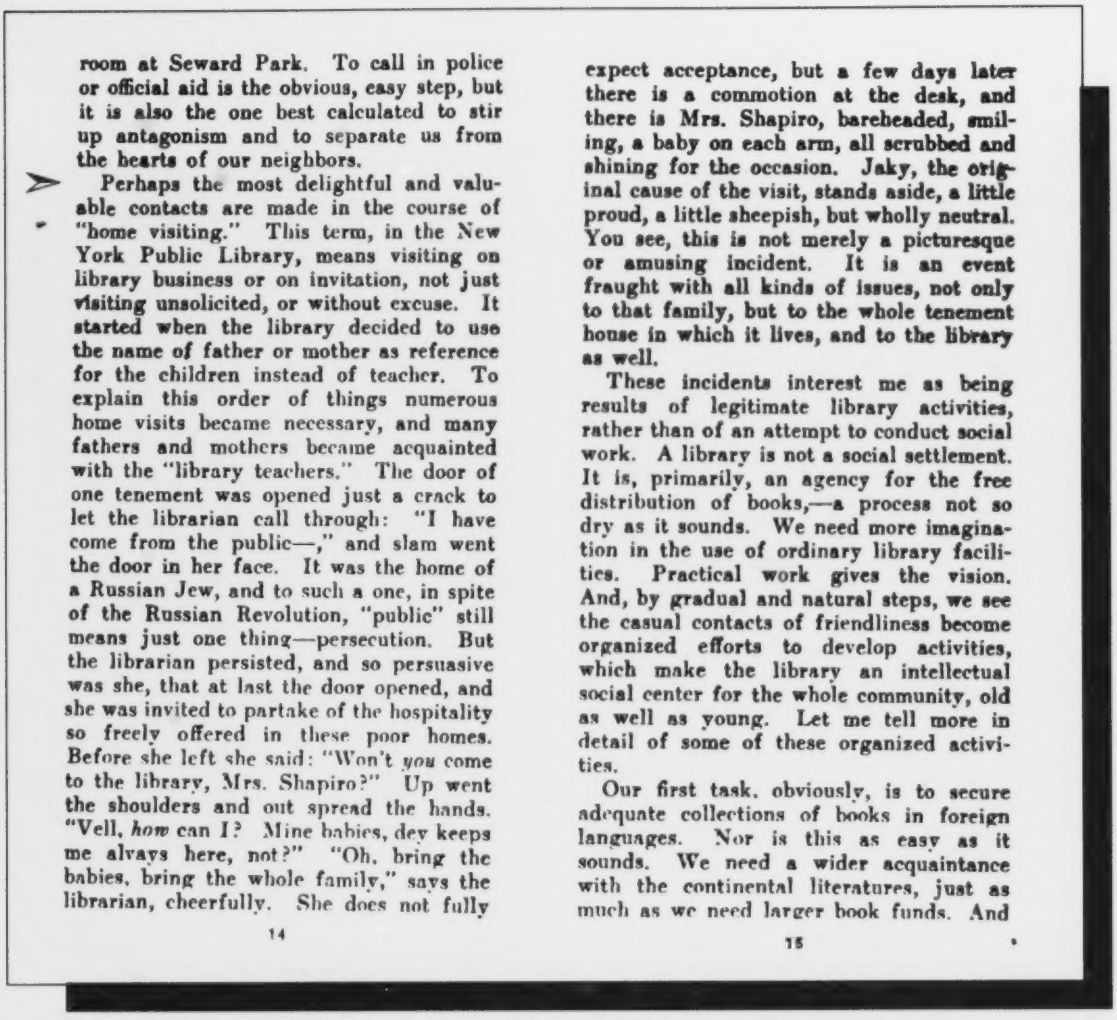
The 1960s saw another important breakthrough. A realization spread among educational and political leaders that the problems of illiteracy and poverty, health and dependency were all intertwined and needed to be addressed through multiagency programs. Social, health and educational agencies, including the public library, started to look for ways to develop cooperative programs with one another. Funding sources encouraged and often required cooperative designs in proposals.

This was the landscape and the climate of what might be called the first coming of age of literacy programming in the public library.

In 15 public libraries, 1965 found librarians actively engaged in planning and implementing new literacy programs, often with other community agencies. The 15 libraries were:

The Enoch Pratt Free Library
Brooklyn Public Library
The New York Public Library
The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County
Cleveland Public Library
Cumberland County Public Library
Dallas Public Library
Denver Public Library
Public Library of the District of Columbia
Kalamazoo Public Library
Milwaukee Public Library
New Haven Public Library
Free Library of Philadelphia
St. Louis Public Library
Yakima Valley Regional Library

The most common activities were adult class visits to the library and special easy-reading book collections newly set up throughout branch libraries. But there was also evidence of a significantly expanded role for libraries such as an experimental study of a new reading course, *Words in Color*, begun by the Cleveland Public



room at Seward Park. To call in police or official aid is the obvious, easy step, but it is also the one best calculated to stir up antagonism and to separate us from the hearts of our neighbors.

Perhaps the most delightful and valuable contacts are made in the course of "home visiting." This term, in the New York Public Library, means visiting on library business or on invitation, not just visiting unsolicited, or without excuse. It started when the library decided to use the name of father or mother as reference for the children instead of teacher. To explain this order of things numerous home visits became necessary, and many fathers and mothers became acquainted with the "library teachers." The door of one tenement was opened just a crack to let the librarian call through: "I have come from the public—," and slam went the door in her face. It was the home of a Russian Jew, and to such a one, in spite of the Russian Revolution, "public" still means just one thing—persecution. But the librarian persisted, and so persuasive was she, that at last the door opened, and she was invited to partake of the hospitality so freely offered in these poor homes. Before she left she said: "Won't *you* come to the library, Mrs. Shapiro?" Up went the shoulders and out spread the hands. "Vell, *how* can I? Mine babies, dey keeps me alvays here, not?" "Oh, bring the babies, bring the whole family," says the librarian, cheerfully. She does not fully

14

expect acceptance, but a few days later there is a commotion at the desk, and there is Mrs. Shapiro, bareheaded, smiling, a baby on each arm, all scrubbed and shining for the occasion. Jaky, the original cause of the visit, stands aside, a little proud, a little sheepish, but wholly neutral. You see, this is not merely a picturesque or amusing incident. It is an event fraught with all kinds of issues, not only to that family, but to the whole tenement house in which it lives, and to the library as well.

These incidents interest me as being results of legitimate library activities, rather than of an attempt to conduct social work. A library is not a social settlement. It is, primarily, an agency for the free distribution of books,—a process not so dry as it sounds. We need more imagination in the use of ordinary library facilities. Practical work gives the vision. And, by gradual and natural steps, we see the casual contacts of friendliness become organized efforts to develop activities, which make the library an intellectual social center for the whole community, old as well as young. Let me tell more in detail of some of these organized activities.

Our first task, obviously, is to secure adequate collections of books in foreign languages. Nor is this as easy as it sounds. We need a wider acquaintance with the continental literatures, just as much as we need larger book funds. And

15

From *Bridging the Gulf...*, by Ernestine Rose (continued on page 199)

Library in January, 1965; a new Adult Reading Center established in 1964 at the Kalamazoo Public Library, designed specifically to serve adult illiterates; literacy classes established by and held in the Cumberland County Public Library; intensive work between publishers such as Holt, Follett and Reader's Digest and librarians from The New York Public Library, The Brooklyn Public Library and the Free Library of Philadelphia to develop high interest, low reading level materials for adults.

Libraries were connecting for the first time with Manpower Development and Training Projects, television stations with programs such as *Operation Alphabet* and with welfare departments and even prisons.

These 15 libraries, selected from an initial mail survey, were the libraries in the mid-1960s that had the most active or most innovative programs and plans. They were, in effect, pioneers in library literacy service.

*Large events such as the Great Depression, the draft of undereducated service men in World War II and the growth of urban ghettos made illiteracy more visible.*

## WHAT FOLLOWED?

Following this ALA Study and its published report, *Literacy Activities in Public Libraries*, almost two decades passed without major expansions or break-

throughs in literacy programs. Important research however, was published, notably Helen Lyman's work in the 1970s, which influenced publishers to create quality materials and educated librarians about criteria to be used in selecting materials for the adult new reader. Gradually more libraries improved their "easy reading collections for adults" and together with organizations such as Laubach Literacy, Inc. and Literacy Volunteers of America began offering literacy tutoring on library premises.

However, severe budget cutbacks in the 1970s, combined with the library world's uncertainty over its "role" in literacy, slowed down the spread and the development of full-fledged programs.

It was not until the mid-1980s that a second coming of age took place. Nationwide efforts in literacy education reached a crescendo after the publication of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. A coalition for literacy received Federal funding and an awareness campaign was launched by The Advertising Council. Project Literacy US (PLUS) provided an unprecedented outreach campaign against illiteracy using ABC-TV and PBS-TV. The Business Council for Effective Literacy, Inc. served as a catalyst, bringing together the private sector and the public education sector. Against this backdrop, and with library budgets somewhat stronger in the 1980s economy, many libraries were able finally to take a central place in literacy education and provide full programs of direct instruction along with provision of materials and support services. In some cases, these were not dependant on outside funding sources and were not categorized as "special" services. Examples of such programs were seen in the three large metropolitan libraries of New York City and in the Los Angeles County Library System.

there is still the hampering fear of those who think that books in foreign languages may tend to perpetuate the use of foreign languages at the expense of English. But it is a fear dispelled by the facts. Definitely and emphatically it is our experience that increases in the circulation of foreign books are always accompanied by increases in English book circulation, particularly in books on learning English, on citizenship and American history and biography. This may imply a common cause, or it may, and usually does, indicate that those who come to the library first at the call of a Yiddish or Hungarian book, are attracted by the "easy English" shelf, and later become regular readers of English. Russian Jewish immigrant women of mature age are not ready readers of English, or any other language. Yet nearly one-third of the women in the Seward Park Mothers' Club have already taken out their own cards, and many of them are now attempting books in easy English, in a devouring desire to "get the English," which is winning away their children. So are they won to the library and the gulf is bridged.

We are constantly developing the exhibition facilities of our libraries. At the Seward Park Branch, as at the Webster Branch, there are frequent exhibits of the work of local artists, many of them young men and women of exceptional talent. We have exhibited some of the work of young Phillips, the illustrator of Miss Wald's book, "The House on Henry Street," and

16

our branch is one of the exhibit centers used by the People's Art Guild. We have, of course, our "Exhibit Committee," which passes on all applications for exhibition privileges.

One or two libraries have held "old home" exhibits, to which the women of the neighborhood were asked to contribute anything of value or interest which they had brought from the old country. Native music, art, embroidery, craftmanship of many kinds find expression in library rooms open to the public. Embroideries and pottery of exceptional beauty or rarity have thus been brought to light. We see in this an opportunity not only to preserve the people's art, which we Americans lack so sorely, but to teach our children beauty. We should be very tender of that fine appreciation of the rare and lovely, so inherent in many of our foreign people. Moreover, this preservation of our immigrants' culture is a most effective method of "bridging the gulf," for such exhibits make the older people prominent and through the expressed admiration of Americans, often lead to an added respect for them in the minds of their "superior" children.

A similar effect upon the children is attained by story hours in foreign languages, which preserve for them the culture of their own people. One little girl took home a Bohemian book containing the story which had just been read. When she brought it back, she proudly announced:

17

From *Bridging the Gulf...*, by Ernestine Rose

Attempts to defeat illiteracy in America have always been cyclical in nature and public libraries have had to depend on lifts from a rising economy and "national coalitions" to give them the platform to strengthen their services.

THREE AREAS FOR THE 1990s

Now, in the 1990s, if literacy programs are examined in three areas — literacy materials, literacy instruction and literacy support services — there is ample evidence to conclude that the public library occupies an important position among institutions offering help to illiterates. A very large number of libraries in every part of the country are active in at least one of the three areas of service, many in all three. It has been a service that has developed slowly, but steadily since the 1960s, at first as a service that supported the programs of other agencies, then, in the 1980s and 1990s, as a service in many libraries that is fully integrated, coordinated with other agencies and library-managed.

*Public libraries have had to depend on lifts from a rising economy and "national coalitions" to give them the platform to strengthen their services.*

Today the problem of illiteracy is, perhaps, even more threatening than ever, in light of the new challenge of global competitiveness. To become part of the solution, libraries, in spite of their admirable record, have still a way to go. Until more libraries adopt a primary responsibility for the remediation and prevention of illiteracy, they will not be bringing the full potential of the public library into play. Due largely to the leadership and deep commitment of library adult services pioneers, the public library is currently in a strategic position to become an essential educational agency through effective literacy programming. This doesn't mean there is a specific literacy function that all public libraries must perform, but rather that librarians need to be part of the community leadership that designs and implements the most effective overall program for their own specific community. With the problem of illiteracy as large and intractable as it is, most communities will require an important library component in their program for the foreseeable future. Public libraries now have the knowledge, techniques and ideas that they lacked in 1965. This hard-gained knowledge, combined with the commitment to an educated population that has always been implicit in library goals, should usher in a new era of achievement in public library literacy service.

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# A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON LITERACY OUTREACH

*By Mattye L. Nelson*

"Libraries have long been leaders in promoting literacy. In communities across the nation, the public library provides a focus for literacy activities. It is where students go without embarrassment to find materials they need to learn and practice their reading skills. It is where they meet their reading tutors. It is where volunteer tutors are trained to teach others." (*Literacy, Libraries and You*, ALA, 1991)

The American Library Association (ALA) provides leadership in measures, guidelines and publications for the profession. ALA has also been a leader in providing the training in literacy program delivery for many librarians. Because there is already a body of library literature on ALA's leadership in the literacy effort, this article reports the perspective of an outreach librarian who was out in the field nearly 20 years ago, trying to make sense of a very difficult situation.

In 1970, when the Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged was created,* I was a library school student at the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago and working a few blocks away at the Chicago Public Library's Woodlawn Branch. It was in a neighborhood ravaged by gang violence, yet only a few blocks from the University. I could see that our outreach efforts were working with younger children. The preschool story hours and the class visits to schools were always successful. Most of the children got library cards and took books home. What we were not doing is reaching anyone above the eighth grade.

In 1971, I went to my first ALA annual conference. It was an exciting event for me; the discussions on services and materials were a welcome change from the day-to-day guerilla war that was being fought in the streets of Woodlawn. Again, though, I found the focus was mainly on service to children. Outreach programs were trying to reach all segments of the population, but they mainly reached children, who were more easily converted to library usage than were adults. During this time, I finished library school and became head of five libraries located in the Chicago Housing Authority projects called the Reading and Study Centers. If I had thought I had challenges in Woodlawn, "I hadn't seen nothing yet!"

In ALA I found the kind of leadership that I needed to carry out an extremely challenging work assignment. We had a natural audience in the Reading and Study Centers. In Robert Taylor Homes alone, there were thousands of children under 18. Outreach efforts we made to adults were usually poorly received:

> During the outreach efforts, the operating premise seemed to be that providing a variety of quality materials to people who were not using libraries would extend library services to them. The fact that many of those disadvantaged people were not able to read was largely ignored, and there is little evidence of significant library efforts to help teach them. This kind of outreach effort was of value to literate people living in relative isolation, but useless to those who still remained truly illiterate.[1]

My staff and I kept working and trying different ideas to draw the older teens and adults into the centers without realizing that the words "Reading and Study Center" were intimidating to a large majority of those we were trying to reach. We never considered how many people we simply did not reach with flyers and by making speeches at community meetings. We never saw the people who we desperately needed to reach. They were not part of community groups, and the flyers meant nothing to them. As librarians, our outreach efforts missed the very people we thought we had targeted because we were too "print-oriented."

The then-Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged Office provided leadership for those of us in the field searching for ways to reach the unreached. In the mid-1970s, the movement in libraries was toward information and referral service. The purpose of this was to help people find the information they needed. Librarians used this approach because they felt the outreach approach was not successful.

For those who still believed that outreach would make a difference, the Office still provided guidance, networks and support. Under its guidance, I joined a group of librarians involved in the literacy movement. It finally dawned upon us that many people could not read and therefore felt they were not able to participate in any library program. My first venture into organizing for literacy came in starting Literacy Volunteers of Illinois.

* In 1980, the office name was changed to the Office for Library Outreach Services (OLOS).

The leadership for that venture came from ALA where Jean Coleman, who directed the Office of Library Outreach Services and at the time was on the boards of Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy International:

> In 1979, the American Library Association conducted three workshops to train librarians in the techniques of establishing programs to teach basic literacy skills to functionally illiterate adults. One hundred twenty-four participants from 33 states and the Virgin Islands attended the four day workshops. All participants signed an agreement to conduct workshops in their own communities. When follow-up was done in 1981, all participants had lived up to their agreement. This meant that over 862 additional librarians became involved in the literacy effort.[2]

I participated in the first of the four workshops in Syracuse, New York. It was an intensive four-day experience, and I have continued to use the foundation I received there in my work in libraries and in the adult education community. These workshops were the beginning of a strong connection between libraries, literacy and outreach. The connection spread into advocacy for federally funded library literacy programs and was the starting off point for creative and effective library literacy programs. Don Roberts wrote in 1971:

> The potential patron in the community is typically provided with a "list" of this or that (a major part of the delivery system). Thousands and thousands of valuable hours have been burned up on these bibliographies (something that shows up on the monthly institutional report), and so we are caught, as individuals, in the translation of the problems of society's subcultures into knowledge transfer systems. Librarians have become print-dominated, tradition-oriented persons."[3]

These workshops also gave us the link to the literacy providers who had been doing the work long before it became fashionable.

One of the best kept secrets outside the library world is the wealth of creative and successful literacy programs that are part the everyday activity of so many libraries. Librarians have not had the time, or perhaps the inclination, to publicize their efforts. The disinclination is based on principles of confidentiality. The librarian's dilemma can be exemplified by this quotation from Helen Lyman:

> Let no one be deceived. Literacy and reading development at any level presents a very sensitive problem. The involvement by the libraries of the nation requires a dedicated and sustained effort. It is a long term effort that must be made quietly, without fanfare, and with a conscious effort never to expose or exploit the needs of the clientele.[4]

We librarians are strongly aware of the rights of the individual, and we do not take advantage of individuals and their privacy. Yet we must find a way to let the public know about the magnificent and important work libraries do everyday.

*The discussions on services and materials were a welcome change from the day-to-day guerilla war that was being fought in the streets of Woodlawn.*

In an effort to make the work of all those involved in literacy better known to the public, and to foster national literacy efforts, ALA gave the impetus for the founding of the Coalition for Literacy. The Coalition started out in 1980 with 11 members and has grown over twofold in the last decade. The public service announcements that have been developed with the Ad Council and the partnership with Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS) have raised American public consciousness about literacy issues and have helped remove some of the stigma associated with illiteracy. However, the work that libraries have done and are doing has not been adequately recognized. The creative programs that have grown out of ALA's advocacy, Federal funding and library-based literacy programming have not been publicized by the mass media.

ALA has received funding from Bell Atlantic for family literacy grants in the Middle Atlantic States, and from Cargill for a variety of family literacy projects throughout the country and internationally. These projects are resulting in exciting and diverse programs that stretch the dollars far beyond the size of the grants. These programs are innovative, but, even with the force of ALA's prodigious Public Information Office, they have not gotten as much national media coverage as they warrant.

To get more media attention, I believe librarians must move out of the library (as they do when they do outreach and literacy) and become a strong advocate for these programs. Richard Dougherty, Patricia Schuman and Marilyn Miller are shining examples of leaders taking the fight for America's libraries into the national arena. We need both national and local spotlights to protect present

funding and to make a strong case for additional funding. Libraries are one of the best bets for funders' dollars, and we need to let them know that.

The Office for Library Outreach Services has as one of its goals to help provide leadership, guidance and advocacy for literacy and outreach. Our plans include furthering the work done, continuing encouragement of creative programming in family and adult literacy, and developing new initiatives in outreach and literacy that will advance the cause of libraries, librarianship and the services we provide for the people of this country.

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# NEW READERS IN BROOKLYN BREAK OUT OF ISOLATION

*By Deborah Ruth*

The Brooklyn Public Library Literacy program serves over 2,000 students. Our ethnically diverse, multinational student body, ranging in age from 18 to 80, did not learn to read earlier for a variety of reasons: some grew up in a rural area and had to leave school at an early age in order to help their parents or care for younger siblings; some came from countries where opportunities were limited or not offered at all; others went to school in the United States and were pushed from grade to grade in spite of the fact that the instructional methods were not helping them.

The birth of a child or that child's beginning school are important reasons that often bring adults back to school. As parents, they want to assist their children with homework and provide them with the opportunities they had not had themselves. A second reason, often cited by new immigrants, is the need to upgrade literacy skills in order to compete for jobs in our highly technological society. Students who have hidden their illiteracy problems from family members, employers and friends have expressed a powerful need to face their problems and to "stop hiding." Another reason often cited by adults entering our program is that they just turned down a promotion because they were afraid they would not be able to handle the level of literacy it required.

All the students have one thing in common: a tragic, isolating experience that was caused by their lack of literacy skills — skills they need to function in our society. This lack has obliterated opportunities to improve the quality of life for themselves and their families. As a result, adult literacy students return to a learning setting with high motivation to conquer their present limitations. Library literacy programs offer adult students a nontraditional educational setting where learners feel safe and are encouraged to take risks. Learners who work together in small groups lose their feeling of isolation, learn how to help each other solve problems and develop their self-esteem.

Students have reported change and progress in their lives — a growth in self-esteem, independence, empowerment, and higher workplace and higher educational goals.

Growing self-esteem is often the first important sign of change and progress for students. Meeting other students with similar learning needs and school experiences is a powerful moment. Students find out that their limitations are temporary, not permanent, and they develop strategies for tearing down the invisible barriers that hold them back.

Empowerment is an important result of improved self-esteem and literacy education. Parents learn how to deal with the school system, help their kids with homework and monitor their progress. They recognize that they can break the cycle of illiteracy by assuring the success of their children. Other adults have used the literacy programs to pass citizenship tests, register to vote, fight for their tenant's rights, read their own mail, or understand their bills and consumer rights.

Literacy students frequently cite greater independence and self-determination as evidence of their progress. Students report that they are taking new risks, traveling beyond their neighborhoods by learning how to use public transportation, or getting a driver's license and traveling long distances.

*Students find out that their limitations are temporary, not permanent. They develop strategies for tearing down invisible barriers that hold them back.*

Written and oral communication skills also improve. Students report that they can express themselves, articulate ideas, and write letters to family members. Many adult learners had isolated themselves from coworkers or family because of their poor reading skills. As they emerge from their isolation, they find it easier to keep up with current events and open contacts with others.

Many students measure their success through promotion and change in their work lives. They have accepted promotions or taken and passed competency tests, or obtained certification, and with it, job security.

Students achieve important educational goals such as achieving a competency level that will enable them to enter a GED class or to actually pass the GED exam.

A student in the Brooklyn Public Library program recently gave a workshop on student empowerment at a

city conference, hoping to encourage other students and educators to persevere. At that workshop she described her earlier fear and isolation, her concerns that she wasn't "smart enough" and wouldn't be able to learn, and her inability to venture beyond her neighborhood. As she improved her reading and writing skills, she moved out of her isolation. She is now an advanced reader, but if you asked her to talk about her progress she would tell you about breaking down the walls of isolation and how her life changed after that point. She entitled her recent workshop — "From My House To The World."

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## LIBRARIES AND LOCAL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS: CONNECTIONS FOR FAMILY LITERACY

***Why Is It Important?***

Members of the business community provide an effective source of support for family literacy programs. Business people who work cooperatively with librarians to develop family literacy programs participate as partners in planning decisions, as tutor volunteers, as local ambassadors to help publicize the library's literacy efforts, and as sponsors of library programs.

Family literacy programs have a profound influence on the business community by encouraging children and adults to develop reading skills in the home and to help break the intergenerational cycle of low literacy. The reading skills gained or enhanced in family literacy programs are transferred to the community and the workplace, creating a more literate and productive community.

***How Libraries Can Help Establish Partnerships***

1. Develop an information brochure that defines the issues of family literacy and why it is important in your community. Present the facts using a profile of your service area to demonstrate the need and the opportunity to work together with local business partners.
2. Contact service clubs in your community such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and Jaycees. Ask to be scheduled as a speaker, and, in your presentation, stress the importance of family literacy programs to the business community. Add these service clubs to your mailing list for literacy press releases.
3. Contact the community relations manager in the larger local firms and offer to contribute an article about the family literacy project in the company newsletter. Illustrate the partnership potential between area businesses and the library.
4. Develop stronger relations within the business community by asking a businessperson to represent the business perspective on the family literacy project advisory board.
5. Serve as an advocate for family literacy programs. Publicize the project and recruit volunteer tutors through local chamber of commerce publications.
6. Ask your current business contacts who are also members of local service clubs to provide information about the family literacy program to others businesses in the community.
7. Include the service club or business as a sponsor for the family literacy program. Contributions such as paper or printing defray program costs and increase business participation and visibility.

***How Businesses Can Get Involved***

1. Learn more about the issues involved in family literacy. Serve on literacy planning boards and coordinating committees at the state and local level.
2. Encourage employees and their families to become tutors or administrative workers in existing community literacy programs, and provide the support needed for their participation.
3. As members of school and library boards and as civic leaders, work to ensure that schools, libraries, and adult education programs are adequately funded.
4. Provide in-kind assistance to local literacy programs — space to hold classes, donations of computers and other equipment, printing of instructional materials.
5. Loan executive time to help literacy organizations write proposals or seek grants, assist them in their budget and financing questions, or publicize and promote their services.
6. Within the company, disseminate information about library programs designed for people who want to improve their reading skills.
7. Become a role model. Establish a position in the community to help raise awareness of the problem and to solicit more public support for literacy programs on the local and national levels.

For more information, contact: Margaret Monsour, Project Director, Bell Atlantic/ALA Family Literacy Project, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; telephone (800) 545-2433, ext. 4296.

# THE NATIONAL LITERACY ACT: WHAT LIBRARIANS SHOULD KNOW*

*By Barbara Humes*

The Federal government is increasing its support of efforts to improve literacy as a result of the National Literacy Act of 1991. The Act provides for increased funding, authorizes new programs and amends existing programs.

The President signed the National Literacy Act, (Public Law 102-73) into law on July 25, 1991. Prior to Congressional action, Senate and House hearings on literacy and public forums sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education on adult basic education obtained input from many people. The final version of the National Literacy Act (NLA) was strongly endorsed by both the Administration and Congress. The NLA supports important aspects of AMERICA 2000 (the President's education strategy) and the six national education goals agreed to by the President and governors in the autumn of 1989. Goal 5 states that by the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and able to compete in the workforce.

## A NEW DEFINITION OF LITERACY AND NEW EXPECTATIONS

The NLA presents a new definition of literacy. Proposed regulations would extend this definition to all programs under the Adult Education Act and the Library Services and Construction Act, Library Literacy Program (LSCA Title VI). The definition is as follows:

> An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential.

This definition puts literacy achievement in a context that transcends traditional academic grade levels. Rather, it considers the needs of the whole person — needs that may change from time to time or that may be met by methods outside of the traditional classroom. The Act also establishes new expectations. It authorizes five new programs, amends existing Acts and establishes a National Institute for Literacy. It encourages and expects:

- Collaboration and cooperation among literacy providers and local, state and Federal agencies;
- Targeting the needs; and
- Increased expectation for program effectiveness.

## NEW PROGRAMS

The first four newly authorized programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The other will be handled by the Department's Office of the Secretary.

- **State Literacy Resource Centers** — The Governor's office of each state will be able to compete for Federal funding to operate a state literacy center. The four-year grants will be distributed on a formula basis proportional to the state's Adult Education Act basic state funds. The state will provide some matching funds. The centers have three missions: to promote greater efficiency at the state and local level through the coordination of local services, to foster innovation in the use of technology and teaching methods, and to provide training and technical assistance to literacy providers.
- **National Workforce Literacy Strategies** — This program will be implemented only when an existing program, the National Workplace Literacy Program, receives an appropriation of $25 million from Congress. Then up to $5 million of that appropriation will be used for grants to business, industry, labor organizations, or private industry councils in partnership with state or local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, or schools for large-scale projects of national importance.
- **Functional Literacy for State and Local Prisoners** — Correctional institutions or systems can compete for grants to provide functional literacy instruction to adult prisoners. Projects are encouraged to include a one-year post-release follow-up on ex-prisoners. With certain exceptions, grantees must require participation by prisoners with less than an eighth grade education or competency level. Grantees must make use of instructional technology to the extent possible.
- **Life Skills Training for State and Local Prison-**

* This article is based on a talk delivered at 1992 St. John's University Congress for Librarians, "Literacy, the Library and the Family." *The article reflects the views of the author, not those of the U.S. Department of Education.*

**ers** — Correctional institutions or systems can compete for grants to provide life skills training to adult prisoners in order to reduce recidivism. Priority will be given to projects with the greatest potential for innovation, effectiveness and replication in other systems, jails and detention centers. Life skills include education, stress and anger management, job and financial skills development, interpersonal and family relationships development.

- **Family Literacy Public Broadcasting Program** — The Secretary of Education will contract with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for production and dissemination of family literacy programming and accompanying materials that would assist parents in improving family literacy skills and language development. The materials will be available for use and loan at sites chosen from among state and local libraries operating literacy programs, and nonprofit groups serving hard-to-serve populations.

AMENDMENTS TO EXISTING ACTS

In addition to establishing these new programs, the NLA amends existing laws that enable libraries to apply for funding support for their literacy projects or to participate cooperatively with some other agency's project.

- **The Library Services and Construction Act, Title VI, Library Literacy Program,** is amended to give priority to library projects that serve the highest concentration of adults who are without a secondary education or its equivalent, have few community resources, low per capita income and under- or unemployment; and that coordinate with literacy organizations and community-based organizations that provide literacy services.

  **The Adult Education Act, State-Administered Basic Grants Program** is amended to increase effectiveness and accountability of its programs in terms of recruitment, retention and improvement of student skills; provide for evaluation of programs; provide more resources for staff training; coordinate with other literacy providers and services; and assure equitable access to funds by all eligible applicants. The definition of "eligible applicant" is expanded beyond local educational agencies (LEA) to include correctional education agencies, public or private nonprofit agencies, community-based organizations, postsecondary educational institutions and other institutions with the ability to provide literacy services to adults and families. Membership on the optional State Advisory Councils on Adult Education and Literacy specifically includes representatives of the state library program, community-based literacy groups and labor. (Note: Council members are appointed by the governor of each state and advise the state concerning education issues, as specified in the Adult Education Act.)

- **The Elementary and Secondary Act** is amended by authorizing programs to help teachers and school counselors in the early identification of students with reading problems.

- **The Inexpensive Book Distribution Program,** is carried out through a contract with Reading is Fundamental (RIF) and is amended by the NLA to give selection priority to additional local programs that serve children and students with special needs such as low-income children, children at-risk for school failure, children with disabilities, emotionally disturbed children, foster children, homeless children, migrant children, children without access to libraries, institutionalized children, incarcerated children, or those whose parents are institutionalized or incarcerated. The NLA also requires RIF to report annually to the Department on the number and description of additional programs.

- **The Even Start Program** is renamed Even Start Family Literacy Programs. It is amended to revise the eligibility for discretionary grants to include (1) Local Education Agencies (LEAs) applying in collaboration with community-based organizations, public agencies, institutions of higher education, or other nonprofit institutions; and (2) community-based organizations or other nonprofit organizations applying in collaboration with a LEA. (Only LEAs and consortia of LEAs were eligible under prior law.) In addition, Indian tribes, tribal organizations and insular areas are now eligible under a set-aside of funds. Applicants must demonstrate that the area to be served has a high percentage or large number of children and adults in need of services. The principal objective of this program remains the same — to fund education programs for children from birth through age 7 in conjunction with the education of their parents (who must be eligible for services under the Adult Education Act) in order to reduce or eliminate the transmission of illiteracy from generation to generation.

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY

The National Institute for Literacy is intended to improve and expand the system for delivery of literacy services by providing a national focal point for research, technical assistance, dissemination, policy analysis, program evaluation and pooling of ideas and expertise. The Institute assists other Federal agencies to improve literacy services.

The Institute will be administered by an "Interagency

Group" comprised of the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. A National Literacy Board, appointed by the President, will make recommendations to the Interagency Group on the appointments of the Director and staff and operation of the Institute and its programs. The Board will consist of 10 individuals from business, literacy service providers, the literacy research community, state and local government, organized labor and student learners. They will serve three-year terms.

The Institute will conduct basic and applied research and demonstrations on literacy; and provide training and program and technical assistance to literacy programs throughout the U.S., coordinating such activities with regional educational laboratories and curriculum centers. It will establish a national database on public and private sector basic skills programs, assessment tools and outcome measures, and basic education in the workplace. It will collect and disseminate information to Federal, state and local entities with respect to promising literacy methods, including methods of assessment, effective programs and other aspects of research and practice having to do with adult and family learning. It will develop performance and program effectiveness standards, provide a toll-free long-distance telephone hotline for literacy providers and volunteers, and award fellowships to "Literacy Leader Fellows."

## WHAT THE NLA MEANS TO YOU

The National Literacy Act will be significant to librarians only if they (1) think entrepreneurially, and (2) act collaboratively.

All aspects of literacy are covered in the NLA — workplace, family, ESL and basic literacy — so you must ask yourself, "How can my library avail itself of the opportunities presented by the NLA and better serve community needs?"

For starters, consider who might identify and provide the resources that will be used in community-based programs. Will it be a selection committee comprised of only school-based administrators and classroom teachers or will librarians play a meaningful role, providing objective, annotated reviews of materials available in the marketplace? Identify the agency in your community that designs the local adult education program. This agency is usually the one that applies for funding under the Adult Education State-Administered Basic Grants program. Can the library offer a service to this agency such as space in the library for a resource center or a collection of instructional materials (including software) that can be easily used by students to supplement their formal lessons?

Look at the mandates of the NLA outlined above. Agencies will need to act in accordance with these mandates. They will need suggestions and assistance to reach and serve more people. Take your ideas and promote them to the other public or service agencies. See yourself as a potential partner with other agencies with a stake in improving literacy in the community. Determine the needs of the targeted agencies and tailor your suggestions to meet those needs. Let them know what you can bring to them. Become a part of someone else's funding effort.

The challenge is to maintain workable coalitions. For example, seek membership on local literacy boards, keep in touch with local and state educational agencies, and keep your governor and congressional representatives informed of the library's literacy activities.

Librarians must envision and articulate a role for the library in their community-based literacy programs and make an effort to get involved. Unfortunately many agencies often overlook libraries when making plans to improve literacy services because of the not uncommon perception that the only "real" learning is that which takes place in a school classroom. Libraries have to be proactive and innovative in reaching out to other agencies and to all members of the community — nonreaders as well as readers. Nonreaders are taxpayers, too; and libraries are uniquely equipped to help them develop literacy skills and move our national toward the goal of adult literacy and lifelong learning.

With enactment of the National Literacy Act in 1991, the Federal government has increased its commitment to literacy efforts. It is a time of opportunity for libraries in two important respects: to define more clearly their role as literacy providers, often working collaboratively with other agencies; and to seek additional funding to strengthen and expand that role.

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# MAINTAINING A BALANCE TO SERVE LEARNERS

*By Mildred Dotson*

Since the turn of the century, public libraries have been considered the "people's university" or, in today's terminology, "centers for lifelong learning," where suitable materials are provided for the self-motivated individual to pursue educational improvements and opportunities. Early library programs primarily provided resources for self-education; reader's advisory services that would stimulate the reading of quality literature; lectures and book discussion groups; and, in some cities, English classes for immigrants to facilitate their acculturation to American values.

"Although a nationally funded adult literacy education system is a relatively new phenomenon, adult education programs...have existed for many years. Enactment of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, the Adult Education Act of 1966, the Federal Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) reauthorization, and the LSCA Title VI created the funding for the present form of adult literacy education."[1] During the 1960s, expansion in the provision of literacy services included the involvement of public libraries. The framework for a comprehensive adult literacy education system in New York State was established by the mid-1980s.

The range of programs funded with state and Federal funds now includes libraries, public schools, the city and state university systems, volunteer organizations, businesses and community-based organizations. In the 1980s, the *Libraries in Literacy Survey*, conducted by the Contract Research Corporation Education and Human Development, Inc., funded by the U.S. Department of Education, revealed that 53 percent of the 160 libraries surveyed were actively involved in providing literacy services.

Early library literacy efforts primarily focused on developing and adapting current services to literacy needs, i.e., providing appropriate reading materials, library orientation and card distribution, and space for tutorial programs. Although the necessity for universal literacy was acknowledged, the library was not yet considered an appropriate agency for structured instructional activities. Actual instruction in literacy was considered the province of the public schools. The librarian's role as literacy program administrator in the delivery of volunteer tutorial services was greatly increased after the 1960s. Literacy funding in the 1980s enabled libraries to develop more comprehensive literacy programs that included one-to-one and small group tutoring, classroom instruction — especially in English-as-a-Second-Language programs, microcomputer-assisted instruction and writing instruction. Yet the library's emphasis is on learning, rather than teaching.

## EVALUATION OF QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

As the numbers of libraries providing literacy services increased, librarians and others saw the need for effective evaluation measures that address the quality and consistency of program effectiveness. In 1986 Deborah Wilcox Johnson wrote in *Library Trends* that evaluation was cited as one of the most difficult tasks for literacy programs:

> "Because of this difficulty, evaluation is seldom planned...and often the data needed to evaluate the project are not collected. As a result, many library literacy programs are criticized as being expensive, ineffectual, and unnecessary."[2]

As part of a 1991 New York State study of library literacy programs' evaluation methods, Ms. Johnson developed a questionnaire to determine what methods were being used. She found that libraries "ranked the following as the most important measures of literacy efforts: number of students meeting their learning goals, retention rate of students, circulation of materials, number of students, number of tutors, and tutor retention rate."[3] Johnson found that New York libraries used a variety of methods to evaluate their programs. However, there is still a need for evaluation methods that measure program outcomes over a period of years. Outcome measures that evaluate the results of learner participation in literacy programs are difficult for libraries to collect, since most libraries have not traditionally collected information on patron demographics or performance measures.

The ability of library programs to evaluate their literacy efforts by collecting data on student learning goals and the impact of learner participation in a literacy program, e.g., change in employment status, change in reading habits, gain in reading achievement, the implications for instruction of heterogeneous or homogeneous groups, and the special needs of the learners, has not received great attention until recent years. Evaluation tools that measure outcome provide information focusing on the needs of the learner as well as the success of the program.

Libraries have traditionally guarded their patrons' rights to confidentiality. Because of this policy, very little demographic information has been collected on library users. The data collected primarily consists of address, age grouping (children, young adult, 19-65, 65+) and preferred reading language. Access to patron records is protected. Therefore, although acknowledging the need for more data that provides detailed demographic information on learners, deciding where to draw the line in terms of participating in city, state or Federal government-mandated evaluation projects is an issue to be addressed in greater detail by libraries.

## DATA COLLECTION FOR THE NEW YORK CITY LITERACY FOUNDATION

In *Partners for Lifelong Learning: Public Libraries and Adult Education*, the goal for library provision of literacy services as developed by the delegates at the 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services is "...the inclusion of libraries as education institutions in legislation, regulation and policy statements, and...the designation of libraries as educational agencies...."[4]

The designation of libraries as educational agencies may open doors to an increase in instructional services. As libraries offer more comprehensive services and offer more direct instruction, it will become necessary for libraries to evaluate programs in the same manner as other educational institutions. A case in point: the three library systems in New York City are a part of the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative. The Initiative funds literacy programs in the City University, the Board of Education, libraries and community-based agencies. In 1984, the Initiative developed the Adult Literacy Information and Evaluation System (ALIES), a uniform system of data collection to provide timely and reliable information about program impact, as well as information about individual students. ALIES has completed the comprehensive analysis of data on citywide literacy programs for five years.

*Learners are astute enough to understand the link among student personal demographics, funding and program quality.*

Participation in ALIES requires literacy providers to collect information about the learner's ethnic identity, employment status, public assistance status, initial date of settlement in the United States, immigration status, population category (i.e., homeless, in correctional facility, displaced homemaker) and parenting status. "The New York Public Library maintains data on all of its students through the ALIES system. The Queens Public Library submits data on students in classroom instruction for entry into the ALIES system. Data on students receiving tutorial instruction at the Queens Public Library are maintained separately and are reported to funders in aggregate form only. The Brooklyn Public Library, which serves students entirely in individual tutorial or small group instruction, uses the same procedure. These data are not, therefore, included in the citywide data base."[5]

## CONFIDENTIALITY PRINCIPLES AND FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Never before have libraries been required to collect this type of demographic information on patrons. Maintaining the confidentiality of patron records continues to be a concern for libraries, particularly since the FBI, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the police departments seek information on users. The library patron has always used library services freely, without the restrictions of special qualifications and without the library intruding into personal backgrounds. As learners in the "people's university," library patrons participate in programs regardless of immigration status, public assistance status or parental status. The public library's principles of confidentiality and open use now conflict with the need to acquire funds needed to enhance or expand current literacy programs. The current trend in funding for literacy programs is to slate funds for programs that serve a specific population group, i.e., temporary residents, parents of school-age children and refugees. This type of categorical funding often means that libraries may forgo applying for funds rather than limit their programs to selected populations. The debate over "the concept of the library as a 'people's university,' to which [students] turn for assistance in self-education, without the strictures of the formal school system, has been pervasive throughout this century...."[6]

The issue of confidentiality vs. funding requirements must be closely examined by libraries as the trends in funding become more restrictive and require more performance outcome measures. This is particularly true for funding that is slated for parent/child literacy programs. Children have always been encouraged to use libraries without the concerns of meeting school-like testing measurements. Parent/child literacy programs in libraries must continue to focus on the development of children's reading skills without means tests, without compromising open access and confidentiality principles, and without having to measure the performance of individual children and adults.

## THE VALUE OF DATA — A PERSPECTIVE BASED ON ALIES

Administrators of library literacy programs recognize the importance of being able to provide a demographic profile of learners and studying the long-term impact of these programs. The Johnson study revealed that literacy providers outside New York State have already begun making progress in developing follow-up procedures to assess the impact of their literacy programs on learners. These data must be collected to reinforce and expand the library's role as an educational provider of instruction and not just resources, and to justify the types of services the funds are being used for.

Participation in ALIES has enabled the New York City library literacy programs to take advantage of the research methodology used in education. Evaluation of library literacy programs, whose patrons attend regularly, are tested and/or assessed for performance or gain in skill building and who can be compared to a body of learners in other programs has helped the libraries validate the success of their programs. In *Library Programs: Evaluating Federally Funded Public Library Programs*, Ellen Altman and Philip Clark note, "Library programs stand now where educational program evaluation stood 15 years ago. Librarians need to apply the 'concept of educational significance' to their outcomes. To be judged successful a program must be more than innovative, it must prove its validity."[7]

The decision to comply with funding requirements and the need to develop effective outcome measurement tools should focus on providing quality services that can address the social, as well as the educational needs of the learner. The learners who participate in library programs have cited the informal, noninstitutional atmosphere of libraries as a determining factor in choosing libraries as a place to learn. However, these learners are astute enough to understand the link among student personal demographics, funding and program quality. In addition, students do not perceive the intrusive questioning at intake as an invasion of their privacy. These students seek out programs that address their special financial, child care and employment needs. For example, in order for students to become eligible for stipends, the intake form must clearly designate them as recipients of public assistance or living in poverty; temporary resident immigrants who receive a "Certificate of Satisfactory Pursuit" after 40 hours of English instruction must reveal their immigration status.

## NEW MEASURES, NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE LIBRARY'S UNIQUE STRENGTHS

Libraries must negotiate with funding agencies to include evaluation measures that address the participation of literacy students and parents/children in enrichment reading activities, such as reading clubs, book discussion groups, read-ins, poetry and essay writing workshops and contests. These evaluation measures should assess the development of the learner as a lifelong reader and library user. They should also measure the impact of participation in a library literacy program (as compared to other types of literacy programs) on the learner and their families.

*Libraries need to broaden their access to education program funding, improve evaluation measures and compete as a unique educational institution.*

Literacy programs are currently looking at student assessment measures other than standardized tests. The development of self-assessment tools must include questions that can determine 1) if access to free books, videos, cultural programs and nonstructured reading programs impact on student performance, 2) if parent participation in a library literacy program affects their children's use of the library for pleasure reading and homework assignments, and 3) if the learner has recognized and used the library as a community resource. These types of assessment questions are valid in assessing the learner's progress, as well as the impact of the library literacy program. Assessment tools must link the unique services of library literacy programs to learner access to the wealth of library community and education resources that might impact on the learner's experience and performance.

Government and other funders of literacy programs must examine the ways in which policies on confidentiality and open access help them reach people who do not fit into more formal teaching programs. A society that values diversity and is concerned with increasing the competence of all its members needs the unique literacy contributions of public libraries. Government and other funders need to know more about how libraries can help them achieve their literacy goals without compromising fundamental library guarantees of privacy and universal access. Libraries need to broaden their access to education program funding, improve evaluation measures and compete as a unique educational institution. However, libraries must play an active role in developing assessment tools that are effective in measuring both the standard educational requirements, as well as learner participation in the innovative and traditional library programs that do not qualify the participants by economic, immigrant or other group status. If funders and

libraries move in these directions, both will benefit, but the adults and children who use the "people's university" will benefit most.

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# ENCOURAGING REFLECTIVE LEARNING THROUGH READING, WRITING AND ASSESSMENT: A PROGRAM'S JOURNEY

*By Diane J. Rosenthal*

"Teaching reading is a dynamic process in which the reader interacts with the text and the context requires that assessment also be dynamic and interactive. Periodic use of formal, standardized achievement tests cannot provide teachers with enough immediate meaningful information to make needed instructional decisions."[1]

The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing have been offering literacy education to adults in New York City for more than 10 years. Like many other educational programs, ours has struggled with the question: How do we make assessment both meaningful to students, teachers, administrators and funding organizations and consistent with an instructional philosophy that views reading as "dynamic and interactive"?

Before we explore that question, I would like to describe a typical evening at The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing. Learning activities occupy an entire floor of a branch library. Adult students are meeting in small groups of four to six people at round tables with volunteer tutors. They are reading, writing, discussing, laughing and even arguing. In the background you can hear the hum of microcomputers. Some students sit down at them to carefully input recently completed pieces of writing to be included in the next student journal, or they work in small groups using instructional software with the assistance of a computer aide. Other students browse through the books that line the shelves on either side of the room. The site advisor talks about materials available on African-American history. One student suggests that they study the underground railroad. Others express interest in that idea. A theme-based study group is formed.

All of these activities will take place on any given evening at the eight branch libraries in Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island, which serve as sites for the Centers for Reading and Writing. The program began in 1977 at a library in the South Bronx and expanded to its current size in 1984 with receipt of funding from the Municipal Assistance Corporation of New York, as part of the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative. Other organizations included in this huge literacy education effort are the Queens Borough and Brooklyn Public library systems, the City University of New York, the New York City Board of Education and various community-based agencies. The New York Public Library fulfills its commitment to neighborhoods, in part, through this literacy program. And in 1988, the City demonstrated its commitment to literacy education by making the Centers for Reading and Writing a permanent line in the municipal budget.

The Centers for Reading and Writing offer a wide range of literacy services:

- Small group tutoring with instruction provided by volunteer tutors;
- Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes with instruction provided by paid instructors;
- Saturday writing workshop classes;
- Computer-assisted instruction;
- Loans of classroom-size collections of materials for adult new readers to literacy providing agencies in the three boroughs served by The New York Public Library.

## *Change takes time.*

Volunteers are recruited and trained by Centers staff, all of whom are professional educators. The students in our classes are primarily native-language speakers of English and, on average, are between 25 and 45 years old. Centers staff work collaboratively with librarians to ensure that all students benefit from the Library's vast resources.

### INSTRUCTIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Since the beginning of the program, we have held the belief that reading is a dynamic and interactive process. We have always encouraged learners to read and write on topics of their own choice. Instruction aims at helping students build on what they already know and to value and utilize their life experiences in learning to read and write. Learners come to the program for a variety of reasons: To gain confidence in themselves as parents by learning to read to their children and help with homework; to improve their chances in the job market by taking the first steps toward getting a high school equivalency diploma or learning to fill out a job application; to become more independent by learning to use a check book or write a letter to a friend; or to accomplish a dream they never had time to realize, like reading the

Bible. These goals provide the foundation and motivation for their subsequent learning.

## ASSESSMENT: EARLY HISTORY

In her study of evaluation approaches in North Carolina's Adult Basic Education programs, Hanna Fingeret wrote, "Students assess their success and progress in terms of new skills, their ability to apply those skills in a variety of contexts and attitude change."[2] While staff at the Centers for Reading and Writing encouraged students to informally discuss the changes they experienced in their learning, standardized measures were used initially to provide formal assessment of learning. Thus, instructional practices and assessment procedures were not fully compatible in the early years of the program. In fact, we were guilty of over-testing students. Students expected to receive standardized tests, and we were eager to have hard data available to funders to demonstrate the program's success.

Intake procedures combined informal assessment measures and standardized testing. We conducted an interview that focused on goals and prior educational experiences of students; asked for a writing sample; and administered the Degrees of Reading Power, a standardized multiple-choice "cloze"-type test that was compatible with our view that the reader interacts with the text to construct meaning. After completing 12 hours of instruction, students received the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), which is a multiple-choice reading test that converts raw scores to grade-level equivalents. They were subsequently retested at 50-hour intervals of instruction.

We realized early on that the standardized test scores did not yield meaningful information about reading and writing development. All of the rich information that students communicated informally about the changes they perceived inside and outside the learning community, was lost to us. Furthermore, when students' scores did not reflect the progress they felt they had made, they were devastated. Standardized tests reinforced feelings of failure at worst, and at best created unnecessary anxiety. These outcomes were antithetical to our instructional philosophy.

## SEEKING ALTERNATIVES: FIRST STEPS

Through the years we discussed and debated the value of standardized tests. Although we were in complete agreement about the flaws of standardized testing, we did not give up old habits easily. It was not until the fifth year of the program that staff unanimously agreed to abandon standardized testing in the tutorial component of the program and explore authentic assessment alternatives.

We were fortunate that the funding grant did not mandate testing for tutorials in library literacy programs. However, testing was mandated for the Adult Basic Education classes. We were faced with the assessment issues confronting most education programs, that is, how to create assessments that (a) are compatible with instructional practices; (b) motivate and are meaningful to all who participate; and (c) provide measures of accountability.

## EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES: INTAKE REVISITED

Since students receive their first introduction to the program during intake, we decided to begin the revision process there. Interview questions were changed to include more opportunities for students to reflect on goals and to focus on life successes. We also wanted the intake process to parallel instruction. Instead of having students read prepared passages to determine appropriate group placement, we collected stories written by students at the Centers related to the theme of returning to school. At intake, we asked new students to select a passage they felt comfortable with to read and discuss within a small group. Site staff then met with students individually, at which time students read the passage aloud and were asked questions about the text. This process more closely mirrored what happens in groups during instruction and also accelerated the student becoming a part of the learning community. Students were also asked at intake to write on a topic of their own choice and were told not to worry about grammar or spelling. After the piece was finished, staff discussed it with the student, focusing on the content of the writing.

## SMALL GROUP ASSESSMENT DISCUSSIONS: TUTORIALS

The alternative assessment procedure we first experimented with in the tutorials was small group discussions. To begin the process, students reviewed the work in their reading and writing folders. This was the first time many students had the opportunity to look through their work and view it as a whole. Centers staff then led a guided discussion about the changes students noticed in their reading and writing. Some of the questions staff asked included:

- What is your most memorable piece of writing?
- What do you notice about your most recent writing, compared with the writing you did when you first joined the program?
- What is your most memorable reading experience?
- What can you read now that you couldn't read when you first began?

Other questions focused on reading and writing strategies, feelings about group learning and the life and behavior changes students observed in themselves and

others. Staff summarized the discussion in a written report. Students received a copy and were asked to add comments. A copy of the summary then went into the students' folders.

*We have learned that every educational environment is different — a portfolio assessment model needs to be flexible enough to accommodate these differences.*

This method of reflective discussion afforded students the opportunity to look at authentic work samples and assess their strengths, weaknesses and progress.

CHECK FOR YOURSELF: ADULT BASIC EDUCATION CLASSES

In the ABE classes the process was similar. Teachers led a discussion with students about their progress. Students were directed to look back through their reading and writing folders. Teachers asked students to write about their progress and the changes they noticed in their reading and writing. However, in place of a written summary of the discussion, we gave students a self-assessment questionnaire that enabled them to record their reactions to the class and the changes in their reading and writing.

The small group assessment process provided insight into how adult learners perceived their progress and how effective instruction was in helping them achieve their goals. Students felt a sense of accomplishment and validation about their documented efforts. They took more responsibility for what they wanted to learn, and the small group discussion format reinforced their participation in a learning community. These models provided the foundation the for the next phase of our assessment journey: exploring portfolio assessment.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

We decided upon portfolio assessment as the next step because, "The use of portfolios engages students in constructing a story — a long term account — of what and how they learn."[3] Portfolios presented a means of assessing progress that was consistent with our instructional philosophy. Students would set the criteria for evaluating their own work; they would select reading and writing that was authentic and significant to them to include in portfolios, and it would help them develop a new language for self-evaluation and reflection.

*The process of implementing portfolio assessment is more important than the actual product (a complete student portfolio).*

In September 1990, a group of six Centers staff formed a task group to learn more about portfolio assessment and to explore its role within the context of our literacy program. The task group met weekly for two hours. Our goal was not to impose portfolios on the program but to engage in a process that would encourage an exchange of ideas among program participants and allow for the concept of portfolios to take hold gradually. We believed that patience, as opposed to insistence, would pay off. We were also aware that a portfolio system can become as inflexible as standardized testing and that it was important for students, teachers, tutors and staff to experience ownership and autonomy over the process.

The group identified several major questions about portfolio assessment, including:

- What are the differences between reading and writing folders and portfolios?
- What are the purposes of portfolios within our learning community?
- How does the process of creating writing and reading portfolios increase students' awareness of themselves as learners?
- How can we help students begin to talk about the changes they have made in the program and in their lives?

To address these questions, the group decided to design a learning plan that drew upon writing and reading activities we had engaged in with our students and that we felt would challenge us to reflect on the process of implementing portfolio assessment from a programmatic perspective as well as a learner's orientation. We decided upon the following activities:

- Reading and discussing professional articles on portfolio assessment;
- Composing profiles of ourselves as readers and writers;
- Creating personal reading or writing portfolios;
- Introducing portfolio assessment to students and

tutors in the program;

- Engaging in collaborative writing activities reflecting on the task group's own writing processes.

## INTRODUCING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Task group members began conducting pilot projects using portfolio assessment at their Centers, in the ABE classes and in the Saturday writing workshops. For a six-month period I worked at the Mott Haven Center in the Bronx with Teri Martinez, the Site Advisor, to introduce portfolio assessment to her students. This group of new readers and writers had been together for six months prior to my joining them. Teri had been struggling to help them feel more comfortable, particularly with writing, and to work together more collaboratively. Through a process of trial and error we developed start-up procedures that seemed appropriate for these students and helped them to make connections between how we keep track of changes in our daily lives and how we can monitor changes in our reading and writing. The following example describes our introductory sessions.

We began with this statement: "Today we will begin by talking about change: how we keep track of changes in our lives and how we keep track of changes in our reading and writing. At the Centers for Reading and Writing, we are introducing an assessment process, called portfolio assessment. It is a way of helping people look at changes in their reading and writing over time and to assess what they are learning. Today we will begin this process by talking about growth and change and how and why we keep track of it."

A student named Eulalia responded: "Keeping track. It's a way of remembering and knowing who you are, where you come from and where you are going." People also talked about the ways we keep track of our lives: by keeping diaries, photograph albums, bank accounts, birth and death certificates. Other discussion questions included:

- How do you know when you have changed?
- How do you know if you have improved at something?
- How do you keep track of change and growth in your lives?

In the second session, we followed the small group discussion model and asked students to look through their writing folders and think about the changes they noticed. We explained that this was the first step in a process that would eventually lead to selecting a piece to put into a separate portfolio and that it would be their decision as to which piece it would be. As students reviewed their folders, they also organized them. They clipped together drafts, dated the pieces and even organized the writing into subject areas. In the process, students evaluated their own learning. In some cases it was a surprisingly painful experience. One student stated that she had not yet written the piece that she really wanted to write and asked for time to do it. Another said that he couldn't reread any of his pieces. These responses, as well as the ones in which students talked of their accomplishments, illuminated for Teri and me the importance of assessment and how it must be an integral part of instruction.

In the third session, we talked about portfolios and their purposes and asked students the question: What is a portfolio? Students discussed portfolios as vehicles people use to represent themselves as carpenters, models, writers or artists. We then asked students to select a significant piece of writing for their portfolios. Teri and I spoke with each student in the group individually and asked them to discuss why the piece was significant. Students were given the option to write their responses and include them with the piece. It was obvious that through this process students began to take more responsibility for their learning. In fact, the student who could not reread any of the pieces in his folder decided to write about what that experience was like for him, and it became the first piece to be included in his portfolio.

## REVISING ASSESSMENT: THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

These start-up sessions were only the beginning of a long journey that just now has led us to introduce authentic assessment, with a focus on portfolios, to the entire program. As a result of this journey we have made important discoveries about portfolio assessment and, for that matter, any assessment practice that is interactive and involves measuring students' "whole" literacy development. We have learned that every educational environment is different, and a portfolio assessment model needs to be flexible enough to accommodate these differences; that the process of implementing portfolio assessment is more important than the actual product (a complete student portfolio); that assessment needs to be a dynamic part of instruction; that instructors need to hear what students are saying and make the appropriate responses; and, finally, that change takes time.

*Assessment needs to be a dynamic part of instruction — instructors need to hear what students are saying and make the appropriate responses.*

The next phase of our journey includes gathering the

data in a way that is useful to everyone involved in the process of literacy education. Plans include publication of assessment journals containing student writing about their progress and identification of indicators of progress in students' literacy development. It is clear to us that assessment is fundamental to the improvement of education and that authentic assessment holds the key to motivating students and enhancing learning for everyone.

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# LEARNING STYLES AND LITERACY

*By Joan Glasner and Joanne Ingham*

"My daughter doesn't leave her mail lying around the house any more." This is how, Albert, a single father, measured his success in learning to read in the Queens Library literacy program.

Many nonliterate adults, like Albert, are turning to volunteer literacy programs such as those offered by the public libraries in New York. These library literacy programs are successful for a variety of reasons. Not least of these is that they provide nonthreatening and nurturing learning environments and more student-centered instruction. Teaching and learning in these programs is more individualized than in most other educational settings since learners meet with their tutors either one-on-one, or in very small groups. However, this is not enough. Library literacy programs can further individualize instruction and enhance their effectiveness by taking advantage of current insights into learning styles. For this reason, learning style philosophy and methodology should be an integral part of staff and tutor training in literacy programs.

## WHAT IS LEARNING STYLE?

Everyone has a learning style that is unique to that person. We may say that learning style is a combination of physical, emotional and cognitive characteristics which determine how each person learns best.

Each learner has individual strengths and preferences. Some learn best through listening, some through visuals and others prefer manipulating educational materials. Many students learn better in a group, others prefer to work alone or with an authority figure. There is no "best" way to learn for everyone.

We can no longer, then, assume that everyone learns through whatever method the teachers or school system prefers to use. We must identify and adopt an approach to instruction which recognizes and values the uniqueness of each student, each instructor, each person. We must identify and employ a model for learning and teaching which capitalizes on individual differences in the learning environment. The Learning Styles Model developed by the Dunns (see figure 1) has been recognized as a comprehensive and practitioner-oriented model.

## TEACH THROUGH ALL THE SENSES

Some people remember best the things they hear; we call them auditory learners. Only 30 percent of the school-age population appears to be auditory. Approximately 40 percent have visual preference and remember best the things they see. Many people are tactile; they remember what they write, draw or touch. They learn through use of manipulatives. Others are kinesthetic. Kinesthetic learners need to be actively involved with learning; to experience and do. Consequently, field trips, role playing and on-the-job training are excellent ways for them to learn.

We must constantly remind ourselves that auditory, visual, tactile and kinesthetic learners are equally intelligent. They all learn best, however, through resources which match their learning style.

## REDESIGN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Research conducted has consistently demonstrated that when the learning environment complements learners' preferences, performance significantly improves. Seating, lighting fixtures and temperature levels tend to be identical for everyone in most instructional settings and, whatever the acoustics, they are similar throughout the area.

When a person is seated on a hard chair the resulting stress causes the need for frequent changes of position and few can sit passively for more than 15 minutes. Similarly, only some individuals are able to concentrate when the room is very quiet. Others find it helpful to learn when music is played in the background. The same is true for light and temperature. Some think best in bright light, and others find bright light very irritating. Warm temperatures are comfortable for some and other concentrate more effectively when it is cool.

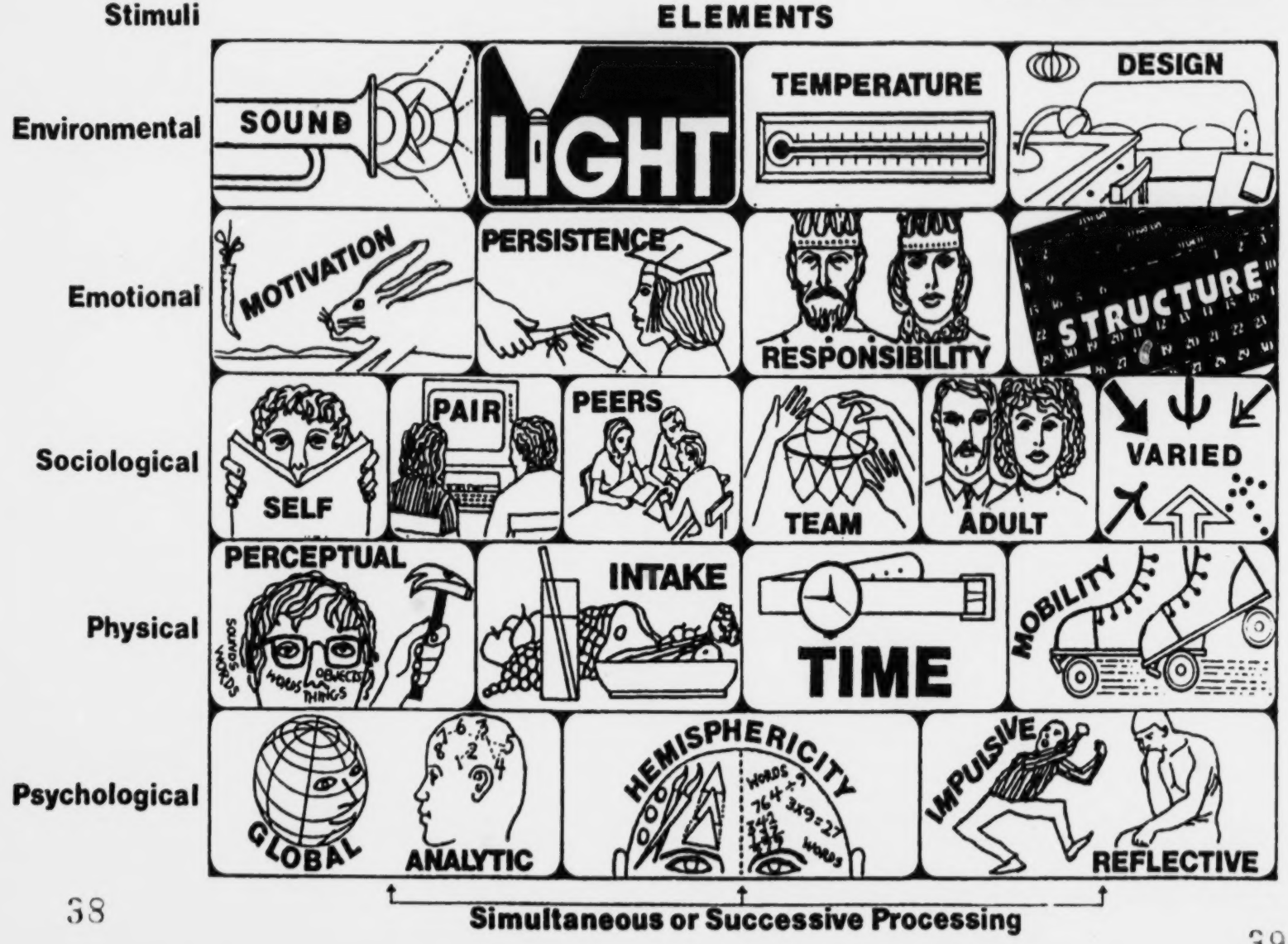
The concept of learning styles should be explained to the learners, the tutors and the staff. Then, working within the limitations of existing circumstances, learning areas could be redesigned to create a variety of spaces, allowing learners to work on soft chairs, or in quiet or well-lit areas, according to the student's learning style.

## LEARNERS EMOTIONALLY APPROACH LEARNING DIFFERENTLY

Motivation, Persistence, Responsibility and Structure

# LEARNING STYLES MODEL

DESIGNED BY
DR.RITA DUNN
DR.KENNETH DUNN



are the elements in the emotional strand of the Dunn and Dunn Model. Motivation increases as one understands one's own learning style. Students who score high on Persistence feel compelled to complete a project once they start it and will begin a new project only after the first has been completed. Those who are nonpersistent begin tasks, work with a burst of energy for a short time, then require a break. They enjoy doing several things at once, and thus have a few projects in which they are involved simultaneously.

Conforming students tend to do what they are told to do; they are thus considered "responsible." Nonconformists enjoy doing things their own way and are often viewed as "less responsible."

Some students require a great deal of external structure; they do not really get into a task unless they understand all its ramifications and frequently need assurances that they are on the right track. Their counterparts rarely follow explicit directions. They like to establish personal guidelines. Students provided the appropriate amount of structure will achieve well when allowed to work in their own way.

## INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPINGS

Some people learn best alone; having others around prevents them from concentrating. Others learn best in pairs or with a small group. Some learn best with a tutor. There is no sociological pattern that is effective for all. Knowing students' learning style preferences can assist in providing them with the most effective instructional grouping. Small group instructional strategies allow students to work as a team, but it is important to note that some students will want to work one to one with the tutor. Programs should try to match students according to the format he or she prefers.

## TIME OF DAY, MOBILITY AND INTAKE

Time of day is an important aspect of learning style. Some of us are early birds who are awake and ready to learn early in the morning. For others who are night owls, concentrating and learning are best done at night.

Approximately six percent of the general population require intake to achieve maximum concentration. For example, they need to eat, chew, snack or drink while concentrating. Another physiological factor is mobility. Some individuals are able to sit for long periods of time while working; others are physically unable to sit for more than 15 minutes. Unfortunately, many who simply have high mobility needs not met in a traditional setting, have been labeled hyperactive or immature.

It is essential for students to be made aware of their needs as to time of day, mobility and intake. They should be helped to realize that they will study best under the conditions which match their learning styles. Although study under ideal conditions may not always be feasible, students can help themselves when learning on their own and when choosing an educational program.

## ACCOMMODATING GLOBAL AND ANALYTIC LEARNERS

The Dunn model recognizes two basic types of cognitive styles. Individuals can process new information using either a Global or Analytic processing style; some can use either style. Global processors learn more easily when they understand a concept first and then concentrate on the details. They pay attention when they are taught through stories, particularly stories with humor and/or those related to their experience. They enjoy illustrations and graphics.

Analytic processors, on the other hand, learn more effectively when information is introduced in a step-by-step sequential pattern that gradually builds details into a conceptual understanding. Young children, for the most part, tend to process globally; as people mature and the longer they are in school, the more analytic they become.

When facilitating a group of students, literacy tutors should introduce new reading passages with a global introduction. Tell a story related to the content or provide an overview before introducing the details. Once the global learners have a concept of the gestalt, the sequential details can be introduced. Finally, summarize the passage for the analytics so they see how the details build to a whole concept.

When tutoring individual students, the reading method can be matched to either a global or analytic style. Meaning is the key for teaching global readers. They can recall words within an interesting context, words that produce images. It is difficult for them to recall words with little meaning or isolated words or sounds. Analytic readers begin with letter sounds, clusters, etc., which are gradually put together to form sentences and ideas In short, phonic approaches are suited to analytic, auditory readers, while whole language and, language experience approaches are effective for global, visual learners. The reading approach used for a student should complement both his perceptual strengths (i.e., visual, auditory etc.) and global/analytic style.

## INSTRUMENTS

Researchers have developed a variety of learning style instruments for determining how individuals process information. Most of these are paper and pencil inventories directed towards determining learners' preferences. Few instruments, to date, have been developed specifically for the adult low-level reader. Although

# AMERICA'S SILENT SCANDAL: ADULT ILLITERACY

*By Richard C. Wade*

When Governor Cuomo named me chairman of his Governor's Commission on Libraries in 1990, I thought I knew a great deal about libraries. I had been, after all, a practicing scholar for 40 years. My specialty, urban history, had led me to research in every kind of library — university, public, archival and specialized. For decades I had fought university administrations for more funding; I had supported my own public libraries; I had helped cities set up their archives, and I was a guardian of the papers of important public figures. In short, I thought I understood libraries and their problems as well as almost anyone else.

I could not have been more mistaken. What I discovered was a library enterprise that is not only in deep trouble but suffering great neglect. That conclusion comes from almost two years of work by the Governor's Commission, a distinguished group comprised of public officials, librarians and the general public. The Commission's work included six public hearings around the state, countless meetings, research by expert staff and the proceedings from two conferences: The Governor's and the White House Conference on Library and Information Services.

Most of all, it never occurred to me that one out of five adult Americans were functionally illiterate. And that it was not that they did not read enough or handle difficult material. It was that they cannot read a want ad, fill out a job application, do elementary banking, or read their kids' report card. The Commissioner's report, *Libraries in the Service of a Free Society*, describes this creeping catastrophe and its consequences for the nation as well as our entire library enterprise.

The Commission's report describes that problem in detail. If public officials and librarians do not now confront the problems of adult literacy as part of the problem, many of the other social problems will become academic. That central fact ought to be, in Thomas Jefferson's phrase "a fire bell in the night" for all of us: The future of our libraries is directly related to the frightening realization that one in every five American adults is functionally illiterate.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF ILLITERACY

The social cost of this illiteracy is enormous. Conservative estimates indicate that it costs society over $200 billion a year in unemployment, underemployment, health and welfare costs, and incarceration charges — and New York State bears one tenth of that cost. Moreover, that problem explains much of what comprises our general national malaise. I will not deal here with the individual loss that accompanies illiteracy: the knowledge that one will never be a full member of society; will never enjoy even a modest measure of the pleasures embodied in reading; will never be able to be a wholly helpful parent; will never have fulfilled ones real potential for a full and fruitful life. The understanding of that quiet catastrophe is beyond those who never experienced it. But the consequences of adult illiteracy to American society are not difficult to calculate.

The most obvious is economic, as detailed in the Commission's report. Our State and nation enter the world of stiff economic competition with a labor pool of only 80 percent, while Germany and Japan can count on a work force of 95 percent or more literate employees ready to contribute to a modern, highly technological, economy. It is simply unrealistic for our nation's leaders to keep promising to "compete" when we enter the ring with one arm tied behind our back. For years, governments on every level have created job training programs to prepare displaced workers for new employment and prepare youngsters for the world of modern work. Yet these programs, no matter how diligently pursued, have not reached those who can neither read or write and who ultimately drift away to the unemployment and welfare lists.

The consequences are in our schools as well. While there is general discontent with our educational system, little consideration is give to one of the root causes of their failure. Illiterate parents produce illiterate children on a greatly disproportionate scale. The relationship is obvious, and it is also ominous. The largest group of adult illiterates is between 20 and 39 years old, indicating that the next decade will see an acceleration of the educational crisis and the familiar lament about inadequate parenting.

The consequences are most clearly in the streets. Over 70 percent of the nation's prison population is illiterate. Worse still, they come out illiterate and in most cases return to prison again. The recidivism rate in the American system is over 60 percent. In Japan, where a convict cannot be released until he can read an write, the rate is five percent. We, of course, cannot use

compulsion, but, unless we break the cycle of illiteracy, the criminal justice system will remain a revolving door that pushes in and out people who cannot read their own indictments.

*Public officials and librarians must not concede that a portion of our population is inevitably and permanently illiterate.*

A further consequence of the rising level of adult illiteracy is its impact on our political institutions. The founding fathers rightfully argued that a democratic society rested on a literate and informed populace. Indeed, it is this faith in the intelligence and good will of ordinary people that made the United States a pioneer in electoral democracy. The last three decades, however, have seen a precipitous drop in voting participation. Only half the eligible voters turn out for a presidential election; fewer still in state and local elections. The whole electoral process presumes a literate public, from filing the application to knowing the location of the polling place, and from reading the ballot to understanding the issues and candidates. In short, the ability to read and write is crucial to a free society. Yet adult illiteracy reduces the voter pool by nearly 20 percent. And there is no reason to expect it will not be worse in the future.

A final consequence of adult illiteracy is to render meaningless most reforms directed to remedy our nagging and persistent social problems. HUD Secretary Jack Kemp wants to give vouchers to the poor so they can find housing in the private market; former Governor Jerry Brown wants vouchers for the poor to receive a negative income tax; President Bush wants to pass out vouchers so that the poor can find their own health program; various educators have long advocated vouchers to pay for private schooling. Has no one asked how someone who cannot read or write is going to read a housing advertisement much less a lease, or file a tax form, understand health insurance or find out which school is best for her children? The "voucher revolution" will surely founder on the rocks of illiteracy.

## A NATIONAL PROBLEM

The primary responsibility for a serious attack on the problem of adult illiteracy lies in Washington. The problem is clearly a national one. Illiteracy does not recognize state boundaries; residential mobility spreads its consequences throughout the country. To be sure, certain states such as New York, California, Texas and Florida have recently attracted disproportionate numbers from Latin America, but these people constitute only a small part of the larger problem, which has deep roots in the last generation and is not confined to recent arrivals. School systems, in the past the historic gateways to literacy, are no longer able to bear this burden alone. Poor reading scores, early dropout rates and reduced achievements bear witness to the scope of illiteracy in some of our oldest regions and its ubiquity throughout the country.

The 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services recognized the national character of the problem and asked for Federal leadership and funding for a concerted effort to fulfill the President's pledge to abolish illiteracy by the year 2000. It also called for the libraries to take on a central role in this national endeavor. Yet there is little reason to believe that the next few years will see more than a modest increase in Federal dollars to an already anemic program. Initiative will have to come from the states.

## NEW YORK STATE CAN LEAD THE WAY IN "LATE START"

New York should once again take the lead in an aggressive, comprehensive approach to help two million New Yorkers to enter the world of productive work. The Commission has recommended that the State make our libraries centers of a war on adult illiteracy. We already have volunteer organizations in the field; State and local agencies have supported community, business and labor union efforts. Most of our libraries have begun the task. I believe New York should create "Late Start" — a program that enables libraries to develop and expand their adult literacy services.

Any library that takes an adult from illiteracy to functional reading and writing should receive $2,000 — $1,000 from the state and $1,000 from the Federal government. Like Head Start, this "Late Start" program would be financed by matching funds. But payment should be tied to results, not to attendance or promises. "Late Start" deals with adults; its funding can be controlled by easily certified success.

## WHY PUBLIC OFFICIALS SHOULD ACT

Adult illiteracy is the most fundamental problem facing the American public today. Moreover, unlike so many other issues, it can be remedied without new equipment or great expenditures of funds. What is required is a commitment by the American public and its elected officials to erase this silent scandal and return this country to its rightful place as the most literate of nations.

# PRISONS — STAGGERING COST OR SAVINGS FOR SOCIETY?

The costs of adult illiteracy also reach into the rising problem of crime and the criminal justice system. By most estimates, the great majority of prisoners in New York State are functionally illiterate. Most enter illiterate, leave illiterate, and, more times than not, return to prison. The cost to society of an exploding incarcerated population is staggering. In New York State the price is $150 a day for each inmate, over $50,000 a year. The cost of each new jail cell is approaching $100,000, and there is no end in sight. New York City is about to add 1,500 new police officers to its force; other communities across the State face the same popular demand. And despite this effort, the public feels no safer.

No doubt a substantial number of violent criminals are in prison for good reasons and should remain there. Tragically, that group is larger than it has been in the past. Yet most convicted criminals can be returned to society without jeopardizing the public's safety and even live useful and productive lives. A new concentration on literacy would enhance this prospect. Most prisons have some library resources, programs that encourage inmates to use such materials and volunteers to assist and encourage them.

Support for these programs is erratic and modest. Moreover, participation is voluntary and requires the inmate to request the service, a procedure that generally filters out functional illiterates. Indeed, the correctional system has no way of knowing the extent of actual illiteracy since its only information about the individual prisoner is last grade level, not the ability to read and write. We already give relief for good behavior and for community service, and there is no reason why the acquisition of literacy should not yield the same reward.

The criminal justice system could offer a simple incentive. A judge, after being informed through test results that a nonviolent convict was functionally illiterate, could adjust the sentence. If, for example, the sentence was five years, the judge could indicate that if the prisoner completed a literacy program successfully, the sentence would be reduced. The judge could also induce very literate inmates to teach reading and writing, also with the possibility of a reduced sentence. Such a program could serve the public interest and drastically reduce the chances of either returning to prison.

A literacy program in jail not only has the value of introducing prisoners to a world they never knew and probably never even imagined, but also gives them a chance for gainful employment and the possibility of someday attaining a respectable place in society. Without this skill, they inevitably return to the community illiterate; facing diminished opportunities, they almost certainly revert to earlier patterns of behavior and wind up once again in the criminal justice system. At least this has been the experience of the past two decades. In Japan, convicts cannot get out of prison until they can read and write. The recidivism rate there is 5 percent; ours is over 60 percent. Of course, in this country we cannot condone such compulsion, but we can make literacy an attractive option for the incarcerated.

Moreover, this incentive can be extended to prisoners who already read and write well. There is no reason why a highly literate inmate cannot get a reduced sentence for teaching fellow prisoners basic literacy skills. In the past few years some prominent citizens — Ivan Boesky, Stanley Friedman, Michael Milken and scores of other "white collar criminals" — have received lengthy sentences. It is not to demean other jobs they perform in prison to suggest that they could be more profitably employed in literacy programs. They, too, cost the system $50,000 a year. Matching the literate with the illiterate could result in immense savings to society every year; its humane dividend, though substantial, cannot be so easily calculated.

In this proposal, libraries obviously play the central role. Every corrections institution holding prisoners sentenced to three years and more should have the adequate facilities — space, materials and professional personnel — to organize, operate and monitor a literacy program. It would also necessitate attracting both volunteers and added staff to teach and assist in instruction. Contemporary methods employ not only conventional materials but video tapes, compact discs and computers. Yet books remain the precondition of a successful program. For a small investment, it is hard to see where the public could get a larger return.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The cost of teaching an adult to read and write is far less than the cost of supporting someone on welfare or keeping one in jail. To support a literacy program with millions will save billions, even in the short run. There is no reason to expect the Federal government to recognize the magnitude of this problem, much less seize this opportunity today, but New York is historically situated to begin on its own with a vigorous program. A modest investment now in a statewide effort to reduce illiteracy will bring immediate benefits in lower expenditures for welfare payments, unemployment insurance and new jails.

It is time for Federal, State and local officials to launch "Late Start" — a general attack on adult illiteracy. It would surely be the most cost-effective program ever presented to the American people. It is gender-free, race-free and family-centered.

"Late Start" has also an important social dimension: It is a family program. One of the most debilitating legacies of adult illiteracy is its passage from one generation to the next. Every study demonstrates that children of illiterate parents will have greater difficulty in learning to read and write than those raised in literate families. There are fewer books, less parental help with homework and only a precarious connection with parent and teacher associations. Moreover, they are less motivated and more prone to drop out of school altogether. Worse still, the prospects of winding up in the criminal justice system are significantly greater.

In short, an assault on adult illiteracy should be at the center of addressing the entangled pathology of contemporary society. Politically, it is one of the few governmental policies that is both intergenerational and race and gender neutral. It is surely the most cost-effective social program available to government in addressing what is, after all, a solvable crisis.

*It is time for Federal, State and local officials to launch "Late Start" for literacy — a general attack on adult illiteracy. It would surely be the most cost-effective program ever presented to the American people. It is gender-free, race-free and family-centered.*

WHY LIBRARIANS SHOULD ACT

The future of libraries is inevitably tied to a literate America. Literacy has always been a primary responsibility of libraries. In the nineteenth century, when formal education scarcely reached the eighth grade, they provided adults as well as children with their only access to the wider world of books and newspapers. In the twentieth century, with the addition of high schools, they became an essential part of the educational system, serving those in school and those who had graduated or even dropped out. Thus, libraries contributed to a process whereby millions of people from all over the world, encompassing different languages, religions, nationalities, cultures and races, moved into the mainstream of American life. Today, libraries large and small, with limited resources, help adults learn to read.

Librarians can show public policy makers the power and effectiveness of libraries — they can demonstrate that libraries are essential to the future of the nation by playing a central role in the comprehensive, vigorous campaign against adult illiteracy that, no doubt, will be the next decade's most important issue.

"Late Start" can help strengthen the libraries, attract young people to a clearly useful career and enhance the status of this most American of institutions.

It is proper that New York State take the lead. After all, it pioneered in library innovations and is still the flagship of the nation's library systems. This country invented the notion of universal literacy, so that in these years when we celebrate the anniversary of the Bill of Rights, is it too much to ask that by the end of this decade, every American can read and rejoice in it? The nation that enthusiastically embraced Head Start should surely welcome the beginning of "Late Start."

**Richard C. Wade** *is Distinguished Professor of History at the City University of New York. He is Chairman of the Governor's Commission on Libraries and was chair of the New York State delegation to the 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services.*

# LITERACY AS PART OF THE LIBRARY MISSION

*By Jerry Nichols*

It is hard to believe that it is still necessary to present arguments on behalf of literacy education as an essential ingredient of the philosophy of librarianship. After all, what could be more important? The fact that there is still a need for the promotion of this concept proves this obviously essential component of our mission is still far from institutionalized in the library field and is still seen as peripheral in nature by too many who should know better.

The question of whether literacy is a part of the library "mission" is rather odd considering we are in the business of dispensing information, knowledge and, with luck, wisdom for the most part through the written word. Illiteracy is the most significant barrier to the dissemination of information in our society. It is a barrier that we must strive to overcome if we, as librarians, presume to do our job.

A casual glance at the writings about illiteracy shows most emphasis focused upon the illiterate individual who lacks the basic skills to succeed as a productive member of today's society. We are reminded time and again of the trap they find themselves in and the cost to our economy. This is, of course, an important and effective perspective. But look at it from the viewpoint of those responsible for determining the direction of our profession for the next century. Does not the inability to read and communicate dramatically effect the future of our own institutions? It is a future clouded by the challenges of accelerating technology, financial constraints and threatened by an ever-widening information gap. If there are not open doors for all people, libraries ultimately will become an exclusive tool of the well-educated, who, with their access to expanding information technologies, will find the traditional library of diminishing value. Where does literacy education fit in our kaleidoscope of services?

Yet another critical facet of the problem arises in the implementation of our myriad competing service objectives in a time of radical change and ever diminishing resources. Practically speaking, can we afford to support literacy efforts in a more than philosophical manner? On the other hand, can we afford not to?

We often like to refer to public libraries as a uniquely American institution. Sometime in the past hundred years or so citizens throughout this land came to the conclusion that in order to fulfill the American dream, access to knowledge should be available to all. This truly democratic concept was, of course, more an ideal than a reality, but gradually this noble idea of free public libraries for all has indeed grown closer to actuality. The fact is that the Golden Age of libraries is not some distant time in the past, but today. A greater percentage of the American population uses public libraries than ever before. No other statistic has such relevance. It matters not that patrons come in only for videos or photocopies, the institution itself is more a part of everyday life in America than ever before.

Our success, however, can also be our downfall. Why venture into new markets when we are busier than ever, especially when our funding is marginal at best? This complacency is dangerous. Many of our public libraries have grown quite comfortable serving the middle classes while complaining about the lack of money. We have a "safe" clientele and a great excuse for mediocrity.

In the midst of our apparently growing popularity, we are blinded to the fact that the future of libraries is dependent on expanding our constituency, a feat that can only be accomplished through better marketing of services coupled with an increasingly literate society. Unfortunately this will not happen without our efforts. The promotion of traditional library services may be an everyday occurrence, but increased literacy will not happen by itself. The continuing influx of non-English-speaking people and the failure of our public education system are creating an ever-widening gulf between those with the essential skills necessary to succeed in our society and those without.

*Can we afford to support literacy efforts in a more than philosophical manner? Can we afford not to?*

In reality we have been supporting literacy efforts in a big way for decades. Youth Services exist to promote reading and the use of libraries for the illiterate and newly literate youngster. What then is the difference between the functionally illiterate child and the functionally illiterate adult. Should not the education of the adult assume even greater urgency?

*Without an aggressive effort to increase the literacy of the public we presume to serve, we will eventually fail in our vision of libraries as a truly democratic institution.*

This simple logic seems not to have been realized in our public libraries. It has certainly not had an effect on the distribution of our resources. It is reasonable to assume that public libraries have spent more time and money attracting new patrons by marketing video tapes than literacy programs. Does that make sense when it is the educated, literate public to whom we constantly look for support?

Perhaps the greatest threat to our society is the widening of class distinction between the information poor and the information rich — those who have the advantage of a good education and those who lack education. This ever-increasing gap lessens our ability to communicate as a democratic society. It affects us all and challenges the concept of equality as we know it. The ability to read, write and speak a common language is the foundation of any civilization. The ability to utilize the tools of a civilization is necessary to being a productive member of that society. Without these common threads a society will pull apart and eventually disintegrate.

This rather apocalyptic view may seem quite far from the everyday activities of the public library but the library is the greatest safeguard against the disenfranchisement of the people. Its simple ideal of an open door for all and a helping hand for anyone wanting to learn can do more to articulate the American ideal than any political agenda yet created. Without an aggressive effort to increase the literacy of the public we presume to serve, we will eventually fail in our vision of libraries as a truly democratic institution.

We, in the library, have carved a secure and respected place in our society. It is a place whose importance is growing daily. We did this by successfully articulating an essential ideal of our American civilization: It is simply that knowledge belongs to everyone. It is our job to help the public attain this knowledge; nothing more, nothing less.

If we lose sight of the library's mission to all members of society — not only to provide information but to enable their access to that information by whatever means necessary — we will certainly never see our true "Golden Age."

**Jerry Nichols** *is Director of the Suffolk Cooperative Library System in Bellport, Long Island. Formerly the Director of the Babylon Public, Freeport Memorial and Half Hollow Hills Community libraries, he is well known for innovative, results-oriented management of public libraries. A frequent speaker and consultant on public library administration, he is currently a member of the New York Library Association Legislative Committee and on the Board of the Public Library System Directors Organization.*

## NEW READERS WRITE

Roger Dovner, Deborah Ruth and other contributors to this issue of *The Bookmark* point out that adults learning to read find that writing and conversing helps their reading. Mamie Chow, Don Chiappetta, Mary Hall, Beaddie Anderson, Diane Francis and Enrique Luis Ramirez, who have contributed the following papers, each learned to read as an adult. They learned in a library-based literacy program, each at a different library — and each is an enthusiastic reader lifelong learner and an advocate for expansion of literacy education.

## WHY I BEGAN THE CLASS

*By Mamie Chow*

I stopped work a year ago. I didn't know what to do. I like working because I have my schedule (what I have to do every day ) and also I can make some money to spend.

When I stay home I have so much on my mind. Sometimes my daughter comes to visit me on the weekend. She said, "How you doing, Mom?" I said to my daughter "I'm fine, but I have lots of things to do around the house. I plant flowers in the back yard. I need to water them every day. Then I have to clean the house. That keeps me busy all the time."

My daughter told me, "You must work. Go to school to learn English for your own good." She said to me, "I will keep on telling you to go to school. You are very negative. You spend some time in the classroom to learn to read and write." I said, "OK, if you can help me." She went to look for the newspaper. Finally, she found an ad about The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing. She called the Bloomingdale Library. She made an appointment for September 1987.

When the school started, I went to take a test. The teacher asked some questions. She asked, "Did you go to school before?" I said, "No, not for English." After she asked the information, she told me, "You're not the right level for this class. I'm sorry." She sent me to the Queens Public Library. The school would be open on November 17th. I said to Louisa Brooke, the teacher, "Well, thank you very much." I was very sad that they did not accept me. So I was still thinking about the school and dreaming of going to school. I had the patience to wait.

Finally, early one morning at about 9 o'clock AM, the phone rang. I answered the phone. It was teacher Louisa. She said, " You remember me?" I said, "Oh yes. Hi, how are you? Is it good news?" She said, " Yes, you can come to school right now. We have a couple of students on your level. I said, "Thanks. I'll come."

I'm so excited. I hurry to get there. It was a long ride from Queens to Manhattan. When I get to the class, I said hello to everyone in class. The teacher came toward me. I was afraid the first day. The teacher told me to read a book. I read a few words and wrote a couple of lines. That's how I began to learn English.

The supervisor and the teacher who work in the reading program are very intelligent, very devoted and hard working. The teacher is experienced and very kind. I'm very grateful and I thank everyone in the class.

I feel great and happy. Now I can read and write through all the rest of my years.

*My name is* **Mamie Chow**. *I was born in China. I came to the United States in 1948. I came with my husband. After a few years, I get my citizenship. I had a tutor come to my house and teach me how to read the questions to get my citizenship. After all, I never went to school until I retired. I been coming to school from November, 1987 to 1992. I began to come to The New York Public Library Bloomingdale Regional Library Center for Reading and Writing. I went to another school at night, also a reading and writing center, Literacy Volunteers. I began going there in July, 1988. That's how I'm learning to get my goal.*

## INTERVIEW WITH LEARNER ADVOCATE DON CHIAPPETTA

**If you could say anything to the thousands of librarians who read *The Bookmark*, what would it be?**

Thanks for giving us a chance.

**What made you go to the library-sponsored, Literacy Volunteers of America/Suffolk County program?**

I had heard ads for it. I travel a lot for my job and listen to a lot of talk shows on the radio to keep up to date on current events. That's how I heard about the program.

**Was there one specific incident that led you to call about the program?**

My wife had a 40th birthday party for me. All of our family and friends were there. Most people brought gag gifts and cards and they wanted me to open the gifts and read the cards. I felt really panicked but my wife came up and said that she would read the cards while I opened gifts to save time. I decided I didn't want to feel that way again. A few days later, I called the library.

**What happened when you called?**

The woman I spoke with asked me some questions and arranged for me to meet my tutor for the first time at the library. She (the tutor) had trouble realizing that I was the learner — she didn't expect me to look like this. When I told her who I was, we sat in the library about 45 minutes just getting acquainted. Today, six years later, she's like a member of the family. When I started, I could read a little bit but not enough to read the statistics of baseball players or about their personal lives. I couldn't get that information from television. That's how my tutor kept my interest — reading about sports.

**What made you choose the library program?**

I really like the idea of one-to-one tutoring. I had been to class in high school and that didn't work. I didn't want to try something that hadn't worked for me before. I also liked the idea of confidentiality. By meeting the tutor in the library, nobody knew why I was there.

**Did you use the library before you started the literacy program?**

Only when I was a kid. I had a library card for identification before I was old enough to have a driver's license.

**What was it like when you learned to read?**

It was like walking into a very dark room and suddenly a light coming on where I could see everything.

**Why do you think you never learned to read?**

I had trouble in elementary school but my parents didn't want

me kept back. I was quiet in school, didn't cause any trouble, and was good in sports. I went to Catholic school and in eighth grade I only had one class. I had religion class first thing in the morning and then I was assigned to work with the custodian. I went to public high school after that and was good in baseball and other sports. They just kept passing me. I was expected to sign with the Philadelphia Phillies but the summer of my senior year I had a rotator cuff injury and that ended my baseball career. My father tried to get me into my uncle's funeral business but I wasn't interested.

**It sounds as if your family has been very supportive.**

My wife, Carol, has been wonderful and so have my children. My brother is a doctor and my sister is married to a doctor. They all knew about my problem. Before I was interviewed by *The New York Times* I asked my children about it and they told me to go ahead. When the article appeared, that was the first time that my neighbors realized I couldn't read.

**What did you do when you could not pursue your baseball career?**

At first I was devastated. I knew that I didn't have the skills for many jobs. I got a job in a printing company and eventually became the supervisor of 17 employees.

**How were you able to do your job without being able to read?**

I could handle the machine very well. If we got a last-minute copy change, I would delegate it to someone who worked for me. The people I supervised never realized that I couldn't read. People who have trouble reading tend to be better employees. They work extra time and are rarely out sick because their jobs are important to them. That's how I was.

**I know that you have "gone public" with your story and spoken to many groups but have you recruited anyone personally?**

I've had a couple of really touching experiences. One day near the holidays I was in a crowded market with my family. The owner was waiting on my wife and she was ordering a number of items. The owner asked her to write them down but she told him that he could do that. He came around the counter and told me that he couldn't read and write. I told him that I had had the same problem. We hugged and laughed and I put him in touch with the program. We had shopped there for years and had never realized that we shared a common problem. The owner told me that he didn't know what made him tell me that day, but I'm glad he did. I felt good about it.

I know another man who owned his own nursery. He couldn't read. When I found out, I put him in touch with my own tutor. They met a few times but it didn't seem to work out. I used to think that I could spot other people with reading difficulties but I can't.

**Many people think that people who can't read are poor or maybe were born in a foreign country. That is not true of you.**

I try to tell prospective tutors that learners are not all like me. Some are; others are not. I don't want tutors to get discouraged. Learners sometimes have other problems or concerns in their life and may have trouble attending a learning session. In general, it's easier to work with adults because they are motivated and want to learn. They don't have to be there.

**How did you come to be on the Literacy Volunteers of America/New York State Board of Directors?**

At first I spoke to groups of people being trained as tutors. After a while, the LVA/Suffolk County affiliate asked me to be on their board. When the LVA/NYS board was looking for learner representation, they asked if I would be a candidate. I have served on that board since 1990.

**What would you like to see in the future of library literacy programs?**

I would like to see greater learner involvement at all levels. More and more learners are attending LVA conferences, creating student groups and running for affiliate office. People setting policy must remember the needs of the learner.

**Don Chiapetta** *is a successful businessman. He was a former student and board member of Suffolk County Literacy Volunteers of America. Currently, he serves on the Literacy Volunteers of America / New York State Board of Directors.*

# MY LITERACY PROGRAM

*By Mary Hall*

June 1992

My name is Mary Hall. I have learned many things from the literacy program and I would like to share my experience with you. Coming to this program has bene read good for me, because I wanted to learn how to read and write. I contacted the literacy program and they set up an appointment for me. I was tested and placed in a class with other students. We have two tutors: Mary and Leo Gruba. Our class met every Saturday.

One thing I really like is my English Language Workbook. It's helping me with my spelling, grammar, capitalizing, sentence structure, punctuation, and writing. My tutor, Mary, is always listening to how we pronounce our words and she corrects us when necessary.

Another thing I like is reading the newspaper, and doing the crossword puzzle in class. The newspaper called *News For You*, comes to the literacy program each week. I was afraid to read out loud and to do the crossword puzzle. Now I love to do it. I see new students come in being afraid just like I was, but once they learn how, they will love it too.

The program has helped me to build my self-esteem. For a long time I was angry with myself. I felt like I was living in a box. I was trying to keep up a good front, but I was afraid, frustrated, and lonely. At that time I did not want the world to know I couldn't read or write. Today I am doing good. I have faith in myself. I also have a close relationship with my tutors. They help me to understand myself. I like their honesty as they are always telling me, I can do whatever I make up my mind to do.

The other students play a big part in my life. I go to a writing class on Wednesday, and love the people there. Sometimes we get into some heavy and serious discussions.

The literacy program has given me hope. Learning for me is like a flower growing slowly. There's no hurry. The English language is beautiful, its like a brand new world for me. When I walk in my classroom on Saturday mornings I know I am going to learn something new.

I thank God and the people at the literacy program for their help. I am glad that there is a place like this for us.

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**Mary Hall** *left her native Georgia with the Freedom Riders at the age of 15. Today she is a volunteer for Catholic Charities and continues to work toward her GED diploma.*

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# GET INVOLVED — IT IS DOWNRIGHT UPRIGHT!

*By Diane Francis*

My name is Diane Francis. I work at the Queens Borough Public Library's Adult Learning Center. I am a staff member as well as a student at the library's learning center. My title is Student Liaison. When I first came into the program, I was about 29 years old. I had been married for about 10 years when I decided it was time to get my education. I worked at a pharmacy. My boss didn't know I could not read. Nobody at my job knew that I couldn't read. My boss liked me for the work I did.

While I was working at the pharmacy, my father died. After seeing the pain in my mother's eyes over the loss of her husband I realized that if my mother, who can read, lost her strength, the loss of my husband, who read everything for me, would have made my pain even greater. The loss of my father made me realize that it was time for me to learn to read and develop my education so that I could go on with my goals.

*My boss didn't know I could not read. Nobody at my job knew that I couldn't read. My boss liked me for the work I did.*

In search of learning how to read a friend of mine told me to try the Adult Learning Center. At the adult learning center I was given a test to tell what level I was reading at. The test result said that I was on a first grade reading level. The staff person told me that I would be placed with a tutor to help me learn how to read.

My tutor's name was Alice Goldreyer. When I first met Alice I liked her. Over time Alice became like a second mother to me. We met four hours every week for tutoring. Before long, with the help of Alice, words on paper soon took on a new meaning. I was now learning how to read and I also learned that reading was fun. Now that I was reading I loved to read love stories, biographies, and inspiring material. I loved to read everything I got my hands on. There are only twenty four hours in a day a day filled with many responsibilities left little or no time for reading, but I made the time.

I started to volunteer my time to speak out on issues dealing with literacy. Within two years I had a part time job at the adult learning center through a grant from the Brooklyn Union Gas Company. Brooklyn Union had wanted to give a student the opportunity to work with students in the program. I was hired to act as a student liaison. As the liaison I would be required to set up meetings with the students so that they would come together as a group within the learning center. Over the past two years I have been attending meetings, conferences, rallies, and giving testimonies at public gatherings dealing with literacy.

I encourage anybody that would like to get involved in their program to do it. To be a part of something that you believe in is inspir-

ing, fulfilling and downright upright.

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**Diane Francis** *has been a student at the Queens Library Adult Learning Center since March 1986. She was the first recipient of the Brooklyn Union Gas Fellowship, an award directed to increasing the job-related skills of the awardee, intensifying student participation in the program and developing stronger community ties for purposes of student and tutor recruitment. Ms. Francis was selected for the Fellowship based upon a commitment to education, demonstration hard work, and a determination to succeed.*

*As Literacy Fellow, Ms. Francis has performed "Bluffin' It," a song she composed about her experiences as a person without reading skills, on several occasions, including the 1990 Adult Literacy Celebration held at Gracie Mansion by the Mayor of the City of New York, as part of the 1990 American Library Association's "Rally On Wheels" Caravan in Atlanta, GA, and at the 1991 Literacy Volunteers of America Conference held in Salt Lake City, UT. Ms. Francis was a delegate to the 1990 New York State Governor's Conference on Library and Information Services. She has testified before the New York City Council and state legislators and at other municipal and state public hearings about the importance of library literacy programs. She is recording secretary of Adult United Voices, a city-wide organization of literacy students committed to expanding the role of student participation within the literacy community.*

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# WINTER

*By Beaddie Anderson*

My mother and I would clean the yard before Christmas. We would rake all the dead leaves that had fallen off the trees in the fall. Then we would get the yard broom and sweep the dead grass all up in a pile together with the leaves so that we could burn them. I looked up across the fields and saw all the neighbors. They would be out raking leaves and burning brush so they would have beautiful yards also. After the yard was clean, at night I would open the door to look out to see how pretty my yard would be looking. Through the moonlight it would be just as white as if frost was on the ground.

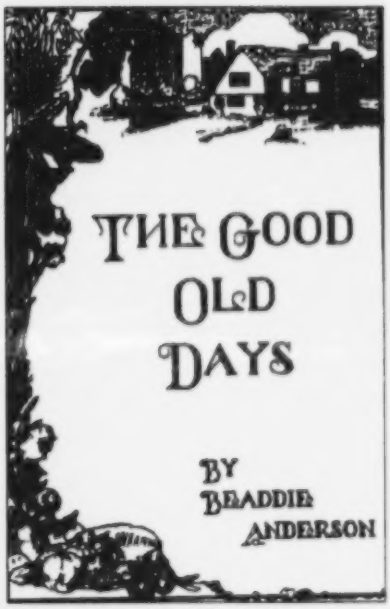
After finishing with the yard, my mother and I would get the house all clean. We would wash windows and hang curtains. Then she and I would go out into the woods and get our Christmas decorations. We would cut holly, pine cones, and cedar branches to make the wreaths out of. Then we would make beautiful chains to put across the fireplace, on the windows, and over the door. I just loved to see Christmas come. Every year I would look forward to seeing my cousins. We would have a good time playing after we ate dinner on Christmas day.

Early in the morning, the day before Christmas, my mother and I would go shopping. She would get a ham, a chicken, and a turkey. We didn't have to buy everything. We had all the rest of the food for our Christmas dinner. It was grown on the farm. Some years the boss would give each family a turkey for Christmas.

When we got back from shopping, I cleaned the sweet potatoes to make the pies while my mother made the cakes. I had to be the one to help her to do the cooking. She would make a lot of food and while it was cooking, you could smell that ham baking and the chicken and turkey roasting. I liked being in the kitchen so I could taste all the sweets. My cousins helped me to lick the cake pans. My mother would bake three or four cakes. She made a chocolate cake, a coconut cake, a jelly cake, and a black walnut cake with white icing. Then she would make six sweet potato pies and four pumpkin pies. We would stay up late Christmas Eve cooking, and my mother and I would get up early the next morning around seven thirty so we could finish. We would make collard greens, baked sweet potatoes, green beans, corn bread, and biscuits.

When everything was almost finished cooking, I would set the table. I got out the forks, knives, glasses and dishes. Then I would go to the pantry to get out the jars of watermelon pickles, pear preserves, cucumber pickles and beet salad that we made during the summer. I would put them in glass dishes and set them on the table. I also put out the wine my mother made for Christmas. When the family got there, it would be time to eat dinner. My aunties would help to put out the meats and vegetables. Then we would sit down to eat. There would be about twenty-one people, all family.

When the children had finished eating, I would be ready to go out and play Little Sally Walker and Blind Man with my cousins. When it was getting dark, my uncle would come out and set off fireworks with




*Information about Ms. Anderson's 47-page, spiral-bound book is available from the Centers for Reading and Writing, Administrative Office, 150 West 100th Street, New York, NY 10026.*

us. We had so much fun. Then they all would leave and go home.

After Christmas, my mother and I would make homemade soap. First we would clean the grease. She would heat it and then take a piece of white cloth and spread it over the top of a tin pail. She strained the grease through the cloth to get out all the little bits and pieces of brown meat.

Then we would get the big iron pot and set it up in the back yard. I put in two pails of water. After that, my mother would put in the grease. Next she would get five cans of lye and empty them into the pot. Then she would stir it all together. When it dissolved, we would put a small fire under it to start it to cooking. As the pot began steaming, my mother put in some turpentine to make the soap harden. I loved to wave my hands across the pot and bring the steam over to me so I could smell it. The turpentine gave the soap a good smell. When the soap thickened, it would be finished. Then my mother would leave it in the pot overnight.

The next morning it would be ready to cut out of the pot. We would take it out and put it on a large table outside, behind the back of the house. After we cut it into cakes, we spread them in the sun to dry. I would take them in every night and put them back outside in the sun the next morning. It would take about a week for them to dry. Then we put them in a big tin can. They would keep all year round.

We used this soap for bathing, for washing dishes, for washing clothes, and for cleaning.

In the middle of January, you would see the snow cloud begin to look heavy and hazy. The blackbirds would begin to fly. You could see them, with their long bills, gathering up peanuts all over the field before the snow covered the ground. I would say to my mother, "Look, it's going to snow." She looked out of the window and she said to me, "It's getting cold."

My mother and I would go out in the woods. She would get the ax and start cutting down trees. I carried the wood up to the house on my back while she would still be cutting. We carried all the wood to the wood pile and then we chopped it up, ready for the fireplace. Then I would get my cousins and we would put all the wood on the porch.

My auntie and I would make up a big red hot fire so that she could make ash cakes. She made up corn meal just like a rock. Then she would put it in the fireplace to cook. We would roast peanuts and crack black walnuts, and eat ash cakes. Then we all would get ready for bed. I peeked out of the window to see how hard it was coming down.

By the next morning, the snow would be knee deep and frozen up on the ground. You could stand on the porch, when the sun came out shining on the ice, and see how it glazed the houses and trees.

My cousins and I built a snowman out in the yard and we played

with snowballs. Mary, Fannie, Buddy and I would cover each other with the snow and slide on the ice in the yard. The yard was large, with a hill. We didn't have skates so I made some. I cut up croaker bags and tied them over our shoes. The ice was so hard and thick on the ground, it would be there for a long time.

Sometimes on a winter night my mother would say to me, "I think that I will make some fried pies tomorrow." The next morning I would get the bread bowl and go in the pantry to take out some dried peaches or apples. Then she washed them so they would be clean to cook. After they were cooked she would set them aside. When the fruit was cool, my mother would sift her flour. She would mix lard into the flour until it was moist and held together. Then she would take her rolling pin and roll it out on a wide board. After that, she would put a saucer on the dough. She would get a knife and cut around the edge of the saucer. Then she would put the peaches or apples inside each little pie shell and fold the dough over. She would take a fork and seal the edges together so that the fruit wouldn't run out when the pies started to cook. She fried them in a deep pan of hot oil. I could smell them when they were cooking. I loved it when my mother made fried pies. Everything she made tasted good.

In the winter my grandmother would not let anybody sleep late. She would say, "Go to bed with the chickens, get up with the chickens." Everyone would get up and wash up. Then I got dressed while my mother made breakfast. She made hominy grits and fatback some mornings. Then the next day we might have sausage and eggs, or hominy and butter. Sometimes we would have fried corncakes or we would have flapjacks with syrup. On Sunday morning my mother always made biscuits and ham. That was my favorite breakfast. I would take a biscuit and sop it in my gravy.

After breakfast, I helped my auntie clean the house. She made the beds and I dusted. Then I swept the floor. About nine o'clock, when everything was finished, my mother, my auntie and I would make a big log fire in my grandmother's room. We would sit by the fire all day making quilts.

First we would make the top. My mother would get her scrap basket out. It was full of different pieces of cloth that were left from making dresses, blouses and slips. She also got some scraps from the big house. I would get the iron out and iron the scraps while my mother sorted them out. After that, she decided on what pattern to make. Her favorite patterns were Tulip, Log Cabin, Road to California and Wagon Wheels. She would take some of the scraps on her lap to cut them into squares or triangles. Next she would take her squares and triangles and piece them together into her pattern. Then she would sew them into blocks. While my mother was doing that, my auntie and I were joining the blocks. Then we would baste them on to a bigger cloth that was about fifteen by twenty-one inches. Nine of these squares sewed together made a top.

After we finished the top, my grandmother, my mother, my auntie, and I would clean the cotton that my mother and I had picked out of the fields. We would pick out the seeds and leaves that were left. Then my grandmother would get her wire brushes and card the cotton. She would straighten out one handful at a time and lay it in a pile. In the meantime, I would get the frame out for my mother so that she could baste the bottom onto it. My mother had already made the bottom from feed bags. She would rip them open and soak them in bleach and homemade soap. When they had soaked for about two or three days, she washed them out and hung them in the sun to dry. After they had dried, I would bring

them inside and iron them. My mother would sew them together to make the bottom. We would put it on the frame. Then we would lay the cotton on the bottom and smooth it all out. After the padding was smoothed out, my mother and I would baste the top onto the bottom. Then we would get the clamps and put them on the ends of the frame to hold the quilt tight. I would get the needles out and thread them. It was time for us to start quilting.

It would take a day for us to finish the quilting. Then we would take the quilt down and my grandmother would put a border around it. Finally, we would hang it out in the sun before we folded it and put it away.

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**Beaddie Anderson** *has been a student at The New York Public Library's Centers for Reading and Writing in the Bronx, since April 1985. "Winter" is from her book,* The Good Old Days, *written for her family. Ms. Anderson did not think she could write a book until she did it. She says, "That was my life." Ms. Anderson testified at the hearing on literacy sponsored by the Governor's Commission on Libraries and held in the Bronx in July 1990.*

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# DON'T HOLD US BACK*

*By Enrique Luis Ramirez*

In elementary school I was in about the 5th grade, and they put us into a speed reading class. It was held in the auditorium. There were 35 kids and an elderly woman teacher, and she didn't really have much control. We played around like it was recess, and I guess it didn't help us but really hurt us. We all had problems later. Thirty-five good readers turned out to be 35 kids with reading problems.

In junior high school all the slower readers were put together. I got onto the track team. The coach gave me a tutor who didn't like to stay after school, so he did my work for me.

In the 9th grade I hurt my leg so no more track. I went to school, signed in but didn't stay, instead I hung out. I had given up.

I kept getting promoted though, with A's, B's, and D's until 12th grade. They didn't graduate me because I was short some credits. When I left, they had me down as an 11th grade drop out.

I signed up for college and went for one semester, studied architecture and did a lot of good drawings, but couldn't read even by own notes. I took a reading class there. The teacher couldn't speak English very well, and I couldn't understand him. So I dropped out of college. I got a job in a janitorial supply house, starting in sales. The job required a lot of reading and writing to learn the chemical formulas. What I would do was go to the warehouse and ask the gentleman there to explain them to me. That way I leaned all the chemicals, and what they did.

A lot of other people there couldn't read. What they did was develop their own dictionary in their minds.

I got married and had a little boy. My wife was the only one working then, and we couldn't just live on here income. She helped me fill out the job applications. I never got the jobs, like machinists, that required reading.

Then I found out about the reading program. About that time I got an entry level job at the airport handling cargo. I advanced to supervisor in a couple of weeks.

*I could see his eyes water, and I'd hurt inside...*

After four months they offered me a job as manager. I stalled on taking it because I couldn't read and write, and the job required it. They didn't know this about me. I was ready to quit.

I went away for a few days then came back and told them the truth about my problem. I said I couldn't read but was in a reading program. They said "That's okay, you're the man for the job."

After that I moved on to a better paying job at United Airlines where I've been for one and a half years now. They knew about my reading and writing problems when I got hired. They — both the

*Reprinted with permission from *Literate America Emerging; Seventeen New Readers Speak Out*, edited by Barbara Prete & Gary E. Strong and published in 1991 by the California State Library Foundation.

company and my fellow workers — support me. I haven't missed a day since I was hired.

Most people who can't read or write get laughed at, and I was used to it. Once there was a note pinned up where I punch in "Go on back to school."

At United there were never any pinned up or printed messages on the walls. And everybody at UA reads. You can see people reading the *Times* and other newspapers during lunch. We do the crosswords. The newspaper is a real hot item.

When I first go into the reading program, my son was about three years. I used to push him away when he asked me to read to him. I could see his eyes water, and I'd hurt inside because that's not what a father is all about. But I wouldn't show it.

Now I read books with him, and we have lots of fun. My two and a half-year old daughter gets so jealous of my reading to my son that she climbs up onto my lap with her book and shoves him off.

In the beginning of 1989 I was asked to testify before the State Small Business Commission. My testimony was about reading and writing and the workplace and how the literacy program helped me.

I told them how I passed the GED and got my high school diploma, passed my drivers test without anyone taking it for me, how I can do my checking account, and go shopping. Now I can read labels, not just look at the pictures on labels, and save money.

Then I was asked to be on the committee to represent literacy students. The other people on the committee are officials. I liked the part about having a student involved. It should be a joint thing with input from the students. Sometimes the state has the right ideas and the right intentions, but we should be able to help, to tell what the needs are and how the program can be improved.

I write a letter to all the programs in the state, and they distributed it to all the students. When I got their feedback I presented it to the committee. We all want to continue something that's working.

Obviously its working because students are succeeding in their lives. I've run into lots of students who've moved up in life because life has changed. My life has changed. I've gone from bad to being more confident in myself feeling more comfortable and positive in the things I'm doing. I've got a good job, my kids are happy; I'm happy.

In the future I want to do more for students. I want to try to bridge the communication gap between employers and employees. I want to let businesses know about people like me, who may have turned down jobs they could do with confidence.

But like me, they had a reading problem. not learning how to read and write was something that just happened to some people, a mistake. But don't hold us back. We may become the perfect employee.

I just spoke at my union meeting of 150 shop stewards. I asked if any of them know of anybody who couldn't read. Fifteen hands went up. It's a macho thing for me to admit. I think it's easier for a woman, she can get away with asking for help.

When people ask if I feel bad about not knowing how to read and write, I say not, I'm doing something about it. When you've been to school and got left behind, a one-on-one learning situation with a tutor helps in so many ways.

*I get excited when I learn something new.*

There are so many people out there who need this kind of help.

I've been a welder for ten years, but I can't pass the state test. I'm a pipe fitter but could never pass the state test. So I've turned down these jobs. How many more people are there like this? If only they heard more about the literacy program.

The state should know that it's got to invest in advertising for these programs. Most of the people on the streets have radios, advertise on the kids' stations. If you push kids to say not to drugs, push them to say yes to reading. Let them get the message on their rock shows.

It's hard to get into it. The first step is hard. Once you start, it's a thrill — a whole new world.

Now I get excited when I learn something new. I can speak up and speak my mind and know what I'm talking about. I can say, "I don't think so."

When people hand out flyers I can read them, instead of folding it up and making a plane out of it. I can vote. It's great. It's changed my life.

**Enrique Luis Ramirez** *is a founder and board member of the San Francisco Bay Area New Readers' Council and represents new readers on the Workforce Literacy Task Force of the California State Senate. United Airlines, his employer, honored him for community involvement. He was a delegate from California to the White House Conference on Library and Information Services in July 1991. He served on a National Issues Forum at the White House. He continues to support library-based literacy programs in his community, California and the nation.*

## PUBLISHING STUDENT WRITING

Most literacy programs today encourage student writing, and many library-based programs publish student and alumni works. Recent publications include *My Mind Take Me Back Home, Stories from the Caribbean* (60 pages, illustrated) by the students of the Brooklyn Public Library Eastern Parkway Learning Center; and *Literate America Emerging: Seventeen New Readers Speak Out*, edited by Barbara Prete and Gary E. Strong (California State Library Foundation, 1991, 130 pp., $11.95). At least one international journal of new readers' writing is available by subscription: *Voices; New Writers for New Readers*, a quarterly published by the Lower Mainland Society for Literacy and Employment, 9260 140 Street, Surrey, BC, Canada V3V 5Z4. The first issue was published in 1988.

existing assessment tools can be used by having the questions read aloud to the literacy student, there remains the problem of the inclusion of items not suitable for this population.

One survey, Hill's Cognitive Styles Interest Inventory, has been adapted for adults with low literacy skills. The SETS (Synergetic Educational Technology System) visual and audible assessment tool is available on computer videodisc and has been validated by the University of California.

In addition, the *Productivity Environmental Preference Survey* (PEPS)[1] assesses the learning style preferences of adults. This self-report instrument, which takes approximately 25 minutes to complete, can be read to the learner or tape recorded for repeated use.

In spite of the dearth of instruments suitable for low-literate adults at present, literacy practitioners should, at a minimum, be sensitive to the fact that individuals learn in different ways and that learners learn best when taught to their strengths. Tutors should have a repertoire of approaches and materials to use for different students. Then, through a process of student-tutor discussion and experimentation, the best techniques can be selected for the particular learner. The mere awareness of learning style makes a difference for the student's self-awareness, achievement and persistence in the program.

## APPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS

Library literacy programs can offer a unique setting for individualizing instruction to match learning preferences. Unlike class-based programs with large numbers of students and fixed curricula, literacy programs are more flexible in the ways they may approach learning and teaching. Methods, materials and social groupings may be varied according to the style of each student. Does the student learn best one-on-one, or in a small group? Is she a visual, auditory or tactile/kinesthetic learner? Does she prefer to be told exactly what is required, or really like to do things her own way?

Research and practice in the area of learning style have clearly indicated that people learn new and difficult information differently. Most importantly, there is conclusive evidence that matching learning environments and approaches to students' learning styles significantly improves performance. Students who have not done well in school have learning styles very different form those accommodated in traditional school environments. Low achieving students have been shown to be highly tactile/kinesthetic, with low auditory skills. They work best in peer groups and informal settings. Since traditional school environments accommodate students with visual/auditory strengths, it is possible that many students entering adult literacy programs have not learned to read because their previous instruction was mismatched with their learning preferences. It may also be true that the long debated controversy over the usefulness of phonics versus whole language approaches is not a question of the superiority of one approach over the other, but rather of which approach matches the individual learner's strengths.

Learning style information may be of particular importance to literacy students and their tutors. Knowledge of their own learning styles can enhance adult learners' self-awareness and self-esteem. It can also empower students to take charge of their learning by learning how to learn.

Tutor Training Workshops should provide tutors with a background in learning style philosophy and methods. This knowledge will give tutors a repertoire of approaches to try with different students. It also offers them a selection of strategies to substitute if a particular student does not seem to be progressing. Learning styles training for tutors should also lead to collections of multisensory materials produced by tutors and pooled for use by other tutors and students.

## CONCLUSION

To meet the challenge of educating each person to be the best he can be, adult literacy administrators must transform the traditional single-curriculum-for-all approach to a student-centered learning environment with varied teaching strategies and multisensory materials.

With this goal in mind, The Adult Learning Center of the Queens Borough Public Library has been making plans to add a Learning Styles component to its literacy program. We hope to provide training for professional staff and volunteer tutors through a series of workshops. Another aim of this project is to develop a core collection of multisensory teaching materials geared to learners with different perceptual strengths.

Learning style theory and practice provide a philosophy, a model and a proven means for meeting today's challenges head on and facilitating a real transformation within the literacy community.

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**Joan Glasner** *is Program Manager for the Queens Borough Public Library's Adult Learning Centers. She was formerly lecturer and teacher training supervisor in the Linguistics Department at Queens College-CUNY. Ms. Glasner has 20 years experience as a teacher trainer and materials developer, specializing in English as a Second Language and the teaching of reading.*

**Joanne Ingham,** *Ed.D., serves as an Academic Advisor at Adelphi University in New York. She also serves as a consultant and Assistant Professor for the Center for the Study of Learning and Teaching Styles at St. John's University in New York.*

# LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION LITERACY UPDATE

*By Patricia E. Feehan*

The October 1, 1990, issue of *Library Journal* contained a "Literacy Clearinghouse" article reporting on literacy and library education.[1] Harvey and Fitzgerald asked, "Are library schools meeting the literacy challenge?" Fifty-three deans of graduate programs accredited by the American Library Association were surveyed to determine the current status of literacy studies in their curricula.

To update this information, another survey was sent to 59 graduate programs accredited by the American Library Association in October 1991. The deans and directors of the schools were asked to forward the survey to those faculty members who might be considered literacy issues contact persons or instructors of library and literacy courses. Forty-three of the 59 schools returned surveys, resulting in a 73 percent response.

## A LITERACY COURSE

Of the 43 schools that responded, 5 indicated that they currently offer a course on literacy or literacy and libraries as part of the basic curriculum. In 1990, four graduate schools reported courses specifically on library literacy program planning: Rutgers, Simmons College, University of South Carolina and North Carolina Central University. In addition, Texas Woman's University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro now offers a literacy course.

The courses include: Texas Woman's University's "Literacy Programs in Public Libraries," which is described as the scope and impact of illiteracy in the U.S.; particularly workplace literacy, adult basic education programs, family literacy and cooperative efforts with Federal and state agencies and community organizations.

Simmons College offers "Literacy: The Issue and the Library's Response," an overview of adult functional illiteracy in the U.S.; an analysis of community literacy needs, design and implementation of programs.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro offers a one-hour seminar in selected topics: "Libraries and Literacy: Entering a New Era," which deals with literacy programs that work; techniques of program evaluation; family literacy and the school media center; public and academic libraries and literacy; collection development; developing projects; technology; working with groups; grants and grassroots fund-raising and proposal writing.

Rutgers University and North Carolina Central University both reported currently offering a course on literacy, but the course titles, "Materials for Adults, Adult Resources and Services" and "Materials for Young Adults," and the short course descriptions suggest that literacy is actually included in these courses as a unit or lecture.

The University of South Carolina's distance education course, "Making Connections: Libraries, Literacy and Literature," is not currently offered, but the course is being updated. The purpose of the course is to provide participants with an overview of the concept of literacy, an historical perspective of the literacy issue, a current perspective of the efforts to improve literacy through libraries and specific ways in which librarians can become more effective providers and partners in the literacy movement.

## LITERACY LECTURES

Respondents were asked if any of their courses included a lecture on literacy or literacy and libraries. Thirty-three schools indicated literacy was covered in other courses. The 1990 survey reported nine schools indicating literacy being covered in other courses. Some respondents pointed out that literacy might be an optional topic in course projects or offered indirectly; for instance, in Basic Reference, literacy is mentioned as a component of public service. Others offered lectures on recurring issues by field experts one-hour credit special topics. Literacy was often mentioned in general survey and issues courses.

Table 1 lists the 13 courses most often including a lecture on literacy and libraries.

Fifteen schools indicated including literacy in Studies in Library Service to Adults. These courses covered adult reading interests and materials. Twelve schools included literacy in their courses on Library Materials and Services for Children and 13 in courses on Library Materials and Services for Young Adults. Information transfer and children and young adults, aliteracy, whole language and students at-risk are discussed. Public Libraries courses include history, philosophy, principles, practices and problems of public libraries and their role in meeting informational and recreational needs of adults; lifelong learning, services to special groups and popular culture collections. "Workplace Literacy" is covered in Libraries

**Table 1**: Library and Information Science Courses That Include a Lecture On Literacy and Libraries

| Course | # | % |
|---|---|---|
| Studies in Library Service to Adults | 15 | 45 |
| Public Libraries | 14 | 42 |
| Library Materials and Services for Young Adults | 13 | 39 |
| Library Materials and Services for Children | 12 | 36 |
| Foundations of Library and Information Studies | 8 | 24 |
| Information Technologies | 6 | 18 |
| Information Transfer and Special Population Groups | 6 | 18 |
| Societal Functions of Libraries and Information Systems | 6 | 18 |
| The School Library | 5 | 15 |
| Collection Development and Management | 4 | 12 |
| Information Needs and Use | 3 | 9 |
| Seminar in Library Science Trends and Issues | 3 | 9 |
| Information Transfer and Diffusion of Knowledge | 2 | 6 |
| Media and Services for Young Adolescents | 2 | 6 |
| Reference Sources and Services | 2 | 6 |

in Society and "information literacy"; "aliteracy" is covered in collection development courses; and "computer literacy" is included in library technology courses. Table 2 lists other courses covering literacy and libraries that were listed by respondents.

## LITERACY ISSUES AND TOPICS

Respondents were asked to check the number of areas of literacy that are covered in any course in the curriculum. Table 3 summarizes the literacy areas and the number of schools considering them as part of their curriculum. Appendix A lists the literacy areas and their descriptions and definitions.

Information literacy, adult new readers and cultural literacy received the highest number of checks. This correlates with the fact that Adult Library Services, Public Library courses and Library and Information Science foundation courses were listed by most respondents as containing a unit on these literacy areas. Whole language, family literacy, aliteracy and at-risk adolescents ranked high and correlates with the fact that courses on materials and services for children and young adults in school and public libraries reported including these literacy areas. One school indicated that although "prison literacy" is not discussed in course lectures, groups of students do visit the library in one of the larger state prisons. "Other" literacy areas included: new minority patrons, English as a Second Language (ESL), visual literacy (which is often related to children's literature), adult basic education (ABE), native American literacy, defining literacy in historical context and multicultural aspects of literacy.

**Table 2**: Other Courses Mentioned Once As Including the Issue of Literacy

| Course |
|---|
| Community Analysis and Library Change |
| Family/Community Relationships |
| Libraries, Contemporary Society and the Adolescent |
| Lifelong Learning in Libraries |
| Planning Library and Information Services (The Planning Process) |
| Preparation For and Characteristics of the Information Profession |
| Repackaging Information |
| Seminar: Educational Function of Libraries and Information Agencies |
| Seminar: Cultural Function of Libraries and Information Agencies |

## PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Respondents were asked if there were plans to teach literacy and library topics in the future. Eight schools were not planning to teach literacy issues in future courses in their programs. One respondent said, "yes," one answered, "perhaps," and another was interested in developing a course but found it difficult to do. McGill

**Table 3**: Areas of Literacy Covered in the Curricula of Schools of Library and Information Science

| Literacy Area | # of schools | % |
|---|---|---|
| Information Literacy | 26 | 60 |
| Adult New Readers | 26 | 60 |
| Cultural Literacy | 24 | 56 |
| At-Risk Adolescents | 20 | 47 |
| Computer Literacy | 20 | 47 |
| Whole Language in School Reading Programs | 19 | 44 |
| Aliteracy | 19 | 44 |
| Family Literacy | 17 | 40 |
| Workplace Literacy | 16 | 37 |
| Prison Literacy | 9 | 21 |
| Other | 8 | 19 |

University is planning to add a "Readers and Literacy" course in 1993. This course will address the roles of libraries in the literacy development of a population. It will look at the learning and thinking processes, strategies and skills of different people and consider the functions of literacy in a library environment.

## WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE?

The 1990 survey concluded that if all the graduate programs that indicated an inclination to add a course or course unit on literacy did so within the next five years, only 47 percent of graduate library education programs nationwide would be providing any sort of professional preparation for library literacy management. The 1991 survey indicates that 64 percent of graduate library education programs are currently providing this preparation in some way.

Many graduate schools are leaving literacy to those faculty preparing youth services professionals in school and public libraries and again, are "counting on instructors of public library services, collection development and adult library services and materials courses to include literacy topics in their courses." That may be because, as one respondent put it, "such a course [literacy] would be excessive except for those students who aspire to be public librarians or school media specialists and who aspire to work with literacy uplift programs." This respondent went on to say, "also the illiteracy/innumeracy problem has been spawned by our obscenely deficient and mismanaged elementary and secondary education, and it is there that the brunt of attention should be directed."

It also appears that breaking down literacy issues into the specific areas of computer, cultural, information, workplace, etc., elicits a big response in terms of what is included in the program in some form or another. This demonstrates that faculty are aware of these specific topics. Only one respondent was unable to respond to the survey because of a lack of definition accompanying the list of literacy areas.

## IMPLICATIONS

As Davis and Fitzgerald suggest, "curricular reform on a large scale is unlikely without a consensus on new directions for graduate library programs."[2] Personally, I am not interested in a consensus or curricular reform. I'm more a proponent of the "one small step for humankind" school of thought. It seems that since the 1990 survey (and the appearance of names and numbers in *Library Journal*), more schools are aware that literacy is not perhaps the burning issue that the impact of new technologies on library operations and services may be, but it warrants attention.

The course offered in the College of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina has also shown that it has created a "change agent" role for itself in the library community.

## CHANGE AGENTS

Change agents are professionals who assist a person, group, organization or system in problem-solving, decision-making and implementation of change in some aspect of development. The role of the change agent has been discussed in a small body of library and information science literature for the past 20 years although the concept had been recognized earlier in sociological and psychological literature. It has been established in the literature that one of the basic roles performed by a change agent is to establish a link between a perceived need and a possible means of satisfying that need. Ronald G. Havelock has categorized educational change agents into four generic types, those of resource-linker, solution giver, process helper and catalyst.[3] As "resource linkers," faculty change agents bring students and needed resources together. As "solution givers," faculty change agents are involved on a one-to-one basis with students who analyze their community and the literacy efforts in that community, select a target group, and propose goals, objectives and activities of an action plan. The "process helper" change agent assists the student through the various stages of recognition, definition and diagnosis of a problem, the selection or creation of alternative solutions, the adoption of a solution and finally, the evaluation of its relevance. As a "process helper," a course such as "Making Connections" stimulates insight, provides encouragement and facilitates literacy efforts. As a "catalyst" change agent, the course energizes the problem-solving process and gets things started in the variety of communities that students and practitioners represent. The assignment in this course is called an *Action Plan* because students are guided to prepare a plan that can be implemented, often before the end of the course. Faculty are teaching students and practitioners to become change agents themselves in order to help others through literacy efforts. Thus, through change agent concepts, the faculty becomes an integral part of the process contributing to the literacy movement. While literacy may not have proved yet to be a "burning issue" in library and information science education, it is a burning issue in real life and warrants a wide spectrum of level of involvement personally and professionally.

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# LITERACY DEFINITIONS

**ALITERACY**: Persons at this level may have achieved enough literacy skills in school to read books, manuals, newspapers and so forth. But they choose as adults not to use these skills. It is not that they lack the capacity so much as the motivation to read and write. Such people may actually brag that they have not read a book in all their adult lives since high school.

**COMPUTER LITERACY**: More and more jobs are incorporating mainframe computers, desktop computers, lap-top or hand-held computers and pocket calculators. The person who seeks a job or wishes to keep a job in a company with such equipment must learn how to use it. The person who fears computers or finds them an indecipherable mystery will be cut off from an ever-increasing number and variety of jobs.

**CULTURAL LITERACY**: Fully functioning adults in our society need to know something about the history of Western civilization, the great political, philosophical, religious and scientific trends that helped to shape our society.* They need to know about current news and trends that are shaping our future. The cultural illiterate can hardly be a well-informed citizen or a responsible voter.

**INFORMATIONAL LITERACY**: "To be information literate a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information."**

**FAMILY LITERACY**: Parents play roles of inestimable importance in laying the foundation for learning to read. What parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than how well off the family is. A critical aspect of family literacy is the social context which shapes it, including the conditions which give rise to literacy problems, culture factors, parents' needs and strengths. Programs which incorporate these factors seem to enhance the possibilities for literacy to become socially significant in family life.***

**WORKPLACE LITERACY**: While many adults in this country read, write and compute at higher skill levels than ever before, millions cannot read, write or think well enough to meet changing job requirements. The workplace is changing to include: new technology, participatory management, sophisticated statistical quality controls and customer service. Employees need new and upgraded skills in order to change with it.****

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# SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA PROGRAMS AND FAMILY LITERACY: OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES

*By Eleanor R. Kulleseid*

Family literacy is one of the most important concepts to emerge from the extensive research on language development and literacy acquisition.[1] A cornerstone of this research is acknowledgement of the importance of early childhood language experiences, involving both speech and print, in the home environment. Related to this is the importance of older family members who serve as communication models and have profound influence on children's understanding of the functions of language — expressive, social, aesthetic and cognitive. Parents who demonstrate literacy skills and enjoy using them will create a foundation for the next generation's successful acquisition of literacy; those who lack them are doubly penalized.

The more that educators know about the social and cultural context for each child's verbal language acquisition and use, the better able they are to help students master the skills and attitudes required for reading and writing; and the more that they connect with parents and other caregivers, the more they can strengthen the home literacy base. School library media specialists have always understood the importance of their programs and collections to the acquisition and enjoyment of literacy in the young. They have also come to recognize the importance of parental encouragement.

Parents play an important role in instilling in children and adolescents the importance of lifelong learning and in developing in them an appreciation of all media. School library media specialists help parents to recognize the needs of their children and to select appropriate materials to meet these needs. To reach this special audience, library media specialists deliver instruction in a variety of ways, including personal consultations, workshops and speaking engagements for civic and governmental organizations.[2]

A search of the literature reveals very little evidence of school library involvement in family literacy programs, in spite of the fact that much of the above-mentioned research in language development and literacy acquisition comes from the fields of education and psychology. A number of school-based intergenerational literacy projects have been reported.[3] Three out of 25 Bell Atlantic/ALA Family Literacy grants awarded in 1990 involved collaborations between school systems and public libraries, as did four of the 13 grants awarded by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Literacy in 1991.[4] There is no mention, however, of school library media centers as participants in these funded programs. The vast majority of family literacy program development and funding has been based in public libraries. Why haven't school library media programs been more connected with family literacy initiatives?

## ORGANIZATIONAL ISOLATION AND OTHER OBSTACLES

There are a number of obstacles to overcome, among them limited concepts of audience and of program, limited resources and limited funding. The most serious obstacle, however, is organizational isolation. The library media center is only one component of the school's educational program. Too many library media specialists, particularly at the elementary level, are locked into a schedule of whole class instruction to provide coverage for teacher preparation periods; or, they may be occupied with other administrative duties that preclude planning and carrying out innovative programming. Even those library media specialists with flexible schedules may not be aware of family literacy program developments in their school and district because the planners have not thought to include them. School-based funded remedial programs, including teen parenting and adult literacy projects, tend to operate outside of conventional classroom and library media schedules. Such projects often originate with other departments such as reading/language arts or career education, and staff members do not always recognize the relevance of school library media resources and programs. This organizational isolation may be related to another obstacle, a relatively narrow definition of the audience and perceptions of need for family or intergenerational literacy programs.

First there is the traditional perception of schools as providing educational services to a limited clientele. Whereas the public library serves a broad community of all ages and stages and has a good track record for adult literacy programs, schools and library media programs tend to be child-centered. Except for some innovative Follow Through programs and teen parenting, parent-school connections have been, at best, superficial. The development of a growing number of school-based parent education programs is based on the belief that such programs will support the child's intellectual and social development. Furthermore, the clientele served is, in a

sense, a captive audience; outreach is limited to a specific population of families whose children attend a given school. For many parents school is a helpful and hopeful place. For others school is threatening, a place where children are labeled and tracked rather than supported.

There is another aspect to the problem of limited clientele. Most family literacy programs are remedial, targeted to families that need adult literacy training, and/or whose children are underachievers on the standardized tests. For school library media programs to be more effective in this arena, program initiatives need to be more inclusive. All parents and children, regardless of background, share common literacy concerns that can be addressed by a school library family literacy project. One is the need for parents to select and share a variety of print and nonprint titles that are appropriate to their child's reading and developmental levels, as well as interests. Another is the need for parents to recognize their importance as role models for all kinds of communication — speaking and listening, as well as reading and writing. Still a third is the need for parents to recognize that activity-based language exchange of all kinds — cooking, watching TV, as well as reading aloud together and talking about books — contributes to literacy development. School library media family literacy programs can be cross-cultural as well as intergenerational.

## THE SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO FAMILY LITERACY

School library media specialists understand the importance of selecting the right book for the right child and how vital the informal exchange about that book can be to the student's appreciation and understanding of her own literacy behaviors in and out of school. They can help parents and teachers in that dialogue with young people. School library media specialists understand and support the new language arts curriculum initiatives — whole language, writing process, reader response workshops and the like — and can implement them in parent programs.

Regardless of their expertise, school library media specialists can only overcome the obstacle of organizational isolation by actively developing internal alliances or partnerships with others in the school and district: teachers, administrators, reading and bilingual specialists and, of course, the Parents Association. They should, with administrative support, also promote alliances with external community agencies such as the public library, volunteer literacy councils, senior volunteer programs, GED or adult education programs, as well as teen parenting programs.

Such alliances can also help school library media specialists to overcome the obstacle of insufficient time and funding. Since expanded services require additional support and collaboration with others who are developing family literacy programs, the library media program will become a part of the larger funding picture. Once an assessment has been made of needs and available resources, a proposal can be sent to a number of possible funding agencies. Many programs are supported by Federal, state and district grants obtained through Titles I and VI of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA); Title I, Chapter D (Even Start); Title III, Part B (Family School Partnership Program); and Title VII (Bilingual Education, Family English Literacy Programs) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).[5] Others are supported by grants from private corporations and foundations; among the best known are the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, the Bell Atlantic Charitable Foundation, the Kenan Charitable Trust and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Foundation.[6]

A number of funded collaborations and school library based initiatives are in the start-up phase in New York City and elsewhere. Sheila Salmon, Director of the New York City Library Power project, reports that a number of grass roots programs for parents have been initiated by elementary school library media specialists.[7] For example, in one school there are language experience-based parent workshops in which the adults write oral histories, make books and share them with their children. In another, there are parenting workshops for bilingual Haitian parents. In a third, the librarian runs a "toybrary" for preschoolers.

*Joint family literacy programs could become the testing ground for a new and most effective level of cooperation between school and public libraries.*

During the past year, school libraries in three New York City school districts have been actively involved in the Dewitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Connecting Libraries and Schools Project (CLASP), coordinated by the New York Public Library. CLASP is a three-year funded program aimed at fostering cooperation between schools and public libraries, promoting family literacy, and increasing public library awareness and use by unreached groups. Project Director Steve Del Vecchio reports that public librarians try to involve school libraries in developing programs.[8] Some focus

on literature and reading with children; some involve ESL and bilingual education activities oriented more to parents. During the first year of the project, one school library media specialists cosponsored a series of parent workshops with the librarian of the local branch library. Parents of children in nine kindergarten classes were invited to these workshops, two of which were held in the school library media center and one at the public library. A grand total of 27 workshops were given during the year. The first series began with a social hour and coffee in the library media center at the beginning of the school day. The children then came to the library media center for a session in which a teacher or librarian shared a story in English and Spanish. After the children went back to the classroom, parents viewed a district-produced video about the importance of their role in modeling and encouraging literacy. Last, but not least, the public librarian invited parents to the local branch library and talked about its programs. Parents were given handouts about the public library in English and Spanish. They were also given a copy of the book read to the class in the library to take home and share with their children. Over 54 percent of the parent body attended this first round of workshops. Some of these activities were partially funded by a parent incentive grant from the New York City Board of Education.

Most school library family literacy activities will be similar to public library programs. In addition to those mentioned above, they may involve workshops on such topics as selecting books for children or storytelling; literacy tutorial programs; library volunteer programs; intergenerational workshops on computer literacy; intergenerational book and film discussions. One important study offers a "Continuum of Involvement in Family Literacy" that can be readily adopted to explore family literacy program possibilities for school library media centers. Varying levels of activity are suggested for collections, materials produced, programs, individualized services and recruitment/promotion.[9] Many are extensions of familiar school library media activities already in place, but any expansions of service will require expanded time, effort, funding and vision. It is clear that library media specialists are beginning to reach out within their schools, to forge alliances with public libraries and other literacy agencies in developing collaborative family literacy programs. Many of these initiatives are in the early phases of development, but the signs are promising. In addition to improving the home-school connection, joint family literacy programs could become the testing ground for a new and most effective level of cooperation between school and public libraries. Perhaps we are coming to understand that educating children is truly a communal responsibility shared by schools, families, social agencies and other cultural institutions.[10]

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF MEN AS ROLE MODELS IN LITERACY

*By Sara J. Willoughby-Herb and Steven L. Herb*

The incidence of marriages ending in divorce is higher in the United States than in any other country of the world. Accordingly, nearly one-quarter of our children are growing up in single-parent families. While more and more fathers are taking on child rearing, the great majority of these children are being reared by their mothers alone.[1] Those of us who work with these children, both directly and indirectly, need to ask what kinds of differences and needs are created by such child rearing situations. Are children raised by single mothers, as many children of divorce are, developmentally disadvantaged? If disadvantages exist, are there ways in which we can compensate for them? In this article we will explore these questions as they pertain to the providers of literacy experiences for children and their families. We begin by examining the contributions fathers make to their children's growth and development; propose a model for viewing fathers' roles in literacy; and finally, suggest some strategies to involving fathers and to help compensate for fathers' absences in children's literary experiences.

## HOW FATHERS CONTRIBUTE TO CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Researchers studying how various child rearing patterns affect children's achievement note that there are positive relationships between children's achievement and their fathers' involvement in their learning. For example, Karnes and Shwedel[2] compared the attitudes and practices of fathers of young gifted children with those of young nongifted children. They found that fathers of the gifted children scored significantly higher in many areas of child rearing. They encouraged more independence in children, reported unconditional high regard for their children, were involved with them more frequently and for longer time periods daily. Specific to literacy, they emphasized reading more, providing information about sounds and letters as they read; they engaged in many conversations with their children as they believed oral language was important in their interactions with their children.

This correlation between fathers' attention and children's achievement apparently is present across cultural groups. In a study of 10th-grade children's achievement across three Hispanic groups in the United States,[3] researchers noted that paternal interaction was significantly more related to achievement than was maternal interaction. Children's achievement was positively related to the fathers' educational aspirations for their children, and to their fathers' press for children's independence. Reading achievement was especially dependent on the father's encouragement of independence.

Taylor compared achievement of 302 eighth-graders from two-parent homes, mother-only homes and father-only homes. She found that the presence of a father in the home was a greater predicator of achievement, than whether children were raised in one- or two-parent homes. Across all academic areas (as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills), the highest achievers were boys and girls from father-headed homes, followed by those from two-parent homes. In reading, children from two-parent homes scored highest, followed by children from father-only homes.[4] Clearly, the presence of an interested father has a positive effect on children's learning; and the absence of a father presents a learning disadvantage. These effects need to be considered by those of us who plan children's literacy programs.

Beyond this relationship between fathering and children's achievement, researchers have attempted to identify specific behaviors that fathers engage in and their related influences on children's learning. One major area of difference between mothers' and fathers' interactions with their children seems to be that of playfulness. Fathers' interactions are more often described as playful and containing unexpected elements. Fathers of young children spend most of their interaction time playing with children. This is even true in situations where fathers are the primary caregivers.[5] Certainly, positive play experiences are related to learning throughout the early years of development.[6]

Researchers have also classified fathers' interactions as somewhat unpredictable. Warden compared techniques used by mothers and fathers while engaged in two alphabet-learning situations (picture books vs. computer software) with their three-year-olds.[7] While the mothers and fathers were more similar than different, the most notable difference occurred in consistency of parents' interactions across tasks. The behaviors of mothers were remarkably similar, whether using a picture book or the software. They directed children's attention and engaged in labeling and elaboration in both tasks. Fathers, on the other hand, engaged in different

# CHILDREN MEET FATHERS IN BOOKS

Many children's books published in recent years reflect the changing roles of males in today's society, and will help children broaden their definitions of fathering as well as provide role models for fathers-to-be and fathers themselves.* We feel confident that if teachers and librarians deliberately provide an abundance of these kinds of books, we can help children find in books what Paul Fleischman says they are looking for in fathers:

"Someone who respects you, yet protects you as well. Someone brave, big-hearted, never discouraged, whose mere presence reassures you that everything will work out."**

A sample of each of the fathering roles discussed in this article is followed by a general list of recommended titles. This list is by no means exhaustive in its coverage of the range of positive male role models that exist in children's literature today.

### Father's Indirect, Supportive Role

*Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti*, by Anna Grossnickle Hines (New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1986). A sweet and funny book, this one gets its charm from Daddy's personality. He's really quite a guy: picks up his son at day-care, does the grocery shopping, cooks, plays jokes to the amusement of his family. The story and pictures portray a loving and realistic picture of a working family.

### Father's Playful Role

*Bea and Mr. Jones*, by Amy Schwartz (New York, Bradbury Press, 1982). This is a wonderfully funny story about a kindergartner and her father who are tired of their days at school and work, respectively. The pictures and words are full of fun, keeping reader and listener giggling — Bea sitting at a conference table dressed in her father's business suit, Bea's father being a whiz at the colored lollipop game played in kindergarten as he answers, "Vermillion red, I believe."

### Father's Teaching Sex-Role Expectancies

*My Dad Takes Care of Me*, by Patricia Quinlan (Toronto, Annick Press, 1987). This story is told by a young boy, Luke, whose unemployed father takes care of him while his mother works. We see the father and son struggling between traditional and nontraditional male sex-role expectancies. Although the boy worries about telling his friends that his dad, not his mom, takes care of him, he realizes there are lots of things he likes about this arrangement. He and his dad play together, talk together, cook together and love each other. At the story's end, they also do homework together because his dad is taking a course by mail. In a great illustration that combats a popular stereotype of females, Mom helps both Luke and his dad with their math homework!

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verbal styles between the two tasks. The three-year-olds tended to follow their mothers' leads more than their fathers.

*Fathers' interactions are more often described as playful and containing unexpected elements.*

At first glance, this lack of consistency in fathers' interactions would seem to be a problem in children's literacy learning. However, some developmentalists believe that this lack of sensitivity or "conversational incompetence" seen in the language interactions of fathers with their young children might be a significant factor in pushing the child to be more competent.[8] The sensitivity and consistency in a mother's interactions provides a broad foundation for language learning and practice; but a sprinkling of conversational insensitivity from a father or siblings motivates the young speaker to try harder to be understood. The father's interaction style seems to support, complement and extend that of the mother.

Although much of the typical father's interaction with children can be characterized as playful, in one area of development fathers exert consistent guidance and set expectations. This involves their perceptions of appropriate sex roles. In most cases, where boys and girls are treated differentially in families, it is primarily done by fathers. Not only do most fathers expect boys and girls to behave according to their traditional male-female roles, they attempt to enforce the compliance. Furthermore, though fathers typically encourage independence in children more than mothers do; fathers give their sons much more attention overall than their daughters.[9] Clearly, as families change and as our society seeks to broaden and equalize the range of possibilities for males and females, this is an area of fathering that might present difficulties for fathers and children alike. While children in our culture will learn about typical male and female role models, they also need to experience and observe enough variety within these role models to make choices about who they are to become. Their choices should fit their own personalities as well as the situations and settings within which they live. For example, as more and more males become single parents, we see an even more pressing need to expose children to nurturant male role models.

## MODEL FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS

Based on the mounting evidence of fathers' influences on children's development, we can assist children's learning by designing programs that incorporate this information. We suggest that our programs should have three goals:

1. Be responsive to and respectful of the influences and roles that father's have in their children's development. The previous literature review identifies these influences as strongest in the areas of:
   - indirectly stimulating children's development, that is in supporting and complementing the mother's role
   - providing a playful approach to learning
   - teaching sex-role expectancies.
2. Provide compensatory experiences for children whose fathers are absent or do not provide positive interactions. While we cannot replace what an intact family life provides, we can provide many experiences in our schools and libraries that are not available to children in fatherless homes.
3. Provide today's children and their families with literature that presents a range of positive male role models.

## PLANNING PROGRAMS FOR LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS

We can apply this information on fathering to make our program offerings more suitable to the interests of fathers and to provide children with experiences related to their needs for fathering.

1. Teachers and librarians might check the content of their storytimes and lending libraries for stories related to aspects of fathering. This should influence fathers' enjoyment in reading to their children.

2. Teachers and librarians can assess and, perhaps, revive their own use of the playful and emotion-laden stories that fathers seem to enjoy. This seems especially important for children who do not have lots of contact with fathers. A good resource for these kinds of stories is Jim Trelease's *The Read-Aloud Handbook* (New York, Penguin, 1982). In fact, those of us who have heard Jim Trelease in person or on tape recognize elements in his reading aloud that are related to research on fathering – physical play, humor, emotionality.

3. Book displays in libraries could be constructed with greater attention to portraying positive father models. Librarians working with programs serving at-risk populations might consider the subtle caregiving lessons portrayed in many of the books in the bibliography. These books could provide important lessons for teenaged fathers, or new fathers whose best fatherhood potential has yet to emerge.

4. How about a school or public library Fathers' Day Program that celebrates literary fathers? Children could vote for their favorite book-fathers; fathers could vote for their favorite book-children. Fathers who are writers, illustrators, or storytellers would be great as guest speakers. Displays of books that star fathers would be a fine background against which librarians could present their father patrons with "I'm a Reading Father!" awards or badges.

5. Plan programs particularly for young fathers, that apprise them of their very significant roles in their children's lives, e.g., how interaction with fathers is related to achievement in the middle grades and high school. Perhaps this information will help fathers persist in being important presences in their children's schooling, reading and learning. When planning such programs remember to be patient with their learning and to schedule programs at times suitable for fathers. Robert Hale reports that in his book store experience, it takes fathers a while to believe that it isn't demeaning for them to take an interest in such things as children's books, and that they stop in his store most often just after work and on Saturdays. Robert Hale also notes that while fathers may not spend as much time shopping in his store, when they are convinced that reading will be beneficial to their children, they buy many more books than "budget-conscious" mothers.[10] His advice to take time to get fathers involved might be useful when planning book fairs.

6. Invite adult males to participate in programs planned for children so that all children have opportunities to work with and learn from males. For example, have males as guest readers and homework helpers. Remember that though all males may not seem perfectly comfortable and competent in these roles, some researchers believe that a bit of "conversational incompetence" contributes to children's language learning. Furthermore, this provides an opportunity to assist these males in feeling more comfortable in interacting with children's learning.

7. Work hard to hire male teachers and children's librarians. We can never underestimate the generalized positive effects of what we show children by example. Books seeming important to adult males as well as females will provide a crucial model, especially for children from single-parent homes.

8. Remember that one of a father's most important roles is indirect, in supporting mothers in their parenting. We should encourage persons in charge of adult programming in our schools and libraries to provide programs that assist single mothers in their many endeavors, so that they can better parent their children.

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The authors wish to acknowledge the Children's Literature Council of Pennsylvania's *Journal*, Volume 3, November 1, where a preliminary version of this article appeared under the title "The Reading Father" by Sara Willoughby-Herb.

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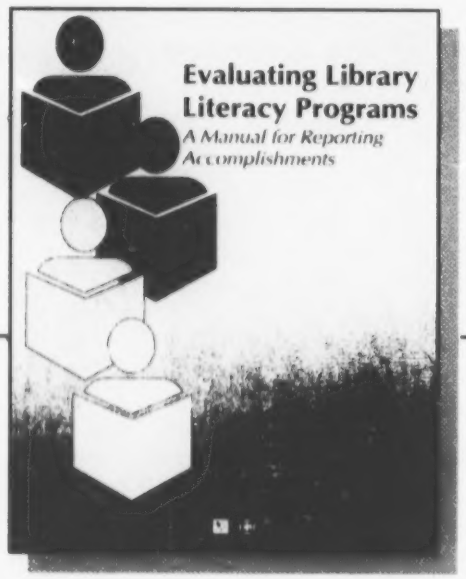
**LITERACY EVALUATION MODEL**

*Evaluating Library Literacy Programs: A Manual for Reporting Accomplishments* was created for the New York State Library Division of Library Development by Dr. Debra Wilcox Johnson from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. The creation, publication and dissemination of the manual was supported in part by a $25,000 Library Services and Construction Act Title IV grant to the New York State Library from the United States Department of Education. Carol Sheffer, Library Development Specialist I in Library Development, was project director for the Literacy Evaluation Grant. Dr. Johnson prepared a questionnaire that was sent to 71 public libraries and library systems in New York State and 50 out-of-state libraries to collect information about existing literacy evaluation methods. In 1991, Johnson and Sheffer introduced the evaluation model in meetings with library literacy experts.

The *Manual* is available in New York State's public libraries and public library systems as well as the other 49 state library agencies and through ERIC. Anyone interested in receiving a copy of the document should contact Kathy DeMarco, Project Assistant, Division of Library Development, New York State Library, Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY 12230; (518) 473-1734.



# THE PAST, PRESENT, AND THE PROMISE OF FAMILY LITERACY*

*By Meta Potts*

As we celebrate the success of family literacy programs in libraries across America and encourage the expansion of these program, we are reminded again and again of our own journey towards literacy. Each of us has a story to tell about how we became the literate persons we are today.

Mine is the story of grandpa. A writer, newspaper editor and printer, he nourished me with language, and he taught me how to love words — those that were printed and those that were spoken. I would find him often, sitting in front of the cherry bookcase, enveloped by its glass doors and lost in discovery. I would watch him participating in what I thought was magic — reading, thinking, reading, thinking. Then, he would see me and invite me onto his lap to share the pleasure of exploring ideas.

Your own stories may recall the family reading together, the collection of books and magazines, the Sunday newspaper scattered across the table and spilled onto the floor. You may remember too, family writing — notes stuck on the refrigerator, letters from Aunt Dee, cherished cards banded and boxed in a safe and secret place. You may picture the family circled around games and puzzles; you can still hear the stories told about family characters. Especially, you remember trips to the library, belonging to the summer reading club and winning the winter reading rally. You remember, too, how you passed on those experiences to your own children — immersing them in reading and writing rituals in a natural and comfortable transfer, so that literacy emerged through scribble writing and a sense of story.

Unfortunately, this transfer does not take place in every home; we know, in fact, that parents who lack basic literacy skills, themselves, cannot provide the nurturing literate culture and climate that stimulates a child's intellectual development. A father whose reading skills are low cannot experience the pleasure of reading to his child, and his child cannot reap the benefits of being read to. A mother who lacks math skills cannot help her third-grader with fractions or her fourth-grader with long division problem. The joy of learning and the celebrations that accompany successful school experiences are too often nonexistent in these families.

## THE ROLE OF THE PARENT AND THE INFLUENCE OF ADULTS

Focusing on the development and growth of literacy forces us to recognize the role of the parent and the influence of the adults in the home on a child's literate behaviors. Aside from the influence of a child's own educational experiences, the most significant variable affecting a child's cognitive growth is the educational achievement of the mother. Literacy development in children will be the most abundant when literate behaviors are demonstrated and continuously used at home. Parents who are unable to perform this function often lacked a model in their own lives for building a supportive learning environment. It seems then, that the chances for educational transfer in these homes are slim.

We are reminded frequently that parental involvement in the school is critical to the child's school success. But parents, who, themselves, feel embarrassed by their own lack of literacy skills are often intimidated by the schools and are reluctant to place themselves in jeopardy of further humiliation. It is easier to remain disengaged than to become involved in their children's school experiences. The conditions that most often prohibit parental involvement occur in low income families in which parents are struggling to break out of poverty. The child's intellect stimulation takes second place to survival needs. And poor children are only half as likely to be enrolled in preschool programs as children of affluent families.

A quick profile illustrates the complexity and the magnitude of the problem and tells us that our task of education is formidable: 75 percent of female heads of households with less than high school diploma are living in poverty; three-fifths of all adults receiving AFDC have not completed high school; and the average reading level of AFDC mothers between 17 and 21 is below sixth grade. Nearly 40 percent of female single parents have an eighth grade education or less. And one-fifth of our nation's children under the age of two are living in poverty.

What is the significance of these statistics[1] on the intergenerational transfer of literate behaviors? Obviously, the basic survival needs outweigh the basic skills needs within the family; in most cases, the overt and conscious attempts at direct literacy intervention rest in the school.

*Address delivered to the 1992 St. John's University Congress for Librarians, "Literacy, the Library and the Family."

*As a teacher, I was sometimes guilty of thinking some parents simply did not care — they wouldn't come to open house or answer the notes I sent home. When I became involved in the family literacy movement, a mother in one of the programs awakened my sensitivity. "Didn't you realize" she asked, "that maybe they couldn't read the notes or the notice of the meeting?"*

This problem is not new. Attempts to tackle it are generations old. Head Start made an impact in simpler times and continues to draw the attention and the financial increases necessary to impact the lives of children whose prenatal experiences were poor, whose birth weights are low, whose nutrition and medical care are inadequate and whose lives are affected by drug abuse, domestic and neighborhood violence.

"In the old days," says Wade Horn, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services Administration for Children, Youth and Families, "we used to say: *Give us children for a few hours a day and we will save them.* Now, we know that we have to work within the entire family context, that if we are going to save children, we have to save the family, and that means working with the parents."

Attempts to address the issue on the parental side are not new either. The goals of adult learning programs are necessarily broad and they often include teaching the mother to read to her child. The Intergenerational Literacy Action Research Project conducted by Wider Opportunities for Woman found that 65 percent of the children of mothers participating in adult education and training programs demonstrated educational improvements as a result of their mother's participation in such programs. These mothers read more often to their children, took their children to the library more often, talked more often with their children about school and helped with school activities more often. Tom Stitch calls this "double duty dollars" and adds: "building intergenerational activities into these programs multiplies this double impact."[2]

## FAMILY LITERACY: TWO GENERATIONS, BOTH LEARNING

Enter two-generational services of Family Literacy Programs, a whole new mind-set. No longer singling out the children or the adults, family literacy programs focus on the education of both, investing in children with preventative measures and reinvesting in the education of their parents because prevention was not enough. By placing the emphasis on literacy development within the family context, the parents know that they are the critical teachers in the child's life.

Family Literacy Programs are a growing phenomenon in the United States, and there is interest in such programs in Great Britain, Canada, Australia and other countries. They are developed on the premise that relationships between children and adults are important and that these relationships affect literacy achievement and activity. The families participate as a unit in a teaching and learning environment. Those of us who have been working in the family movement have learned that the transfer of literacy does, indeed, occur between parent and child, but just as exciting is the transfer that occurs from child to parent. Adults learn by helping their children learn, and, as adults hone their skills and develop their talents, they become more encouraged to support their children's learning needs.

Individual families come together in family literacy programs to become larger families, participating in playful learning, finding support in parent-related discussion groups, focusing on academic needs on both sides; parents on one side, children on the other. Family literacy programs, then, can be described as educative communities, in which both parents and teachers become teachers and learners.

Early research by Ruth Nickse[3] concluded that 300 family literacy programs were operating nationwide in 1988. They did not look the same — configurations varied from complex, multicomponent models to seminars for parents in which reading strategies were the focus. Recently, the National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, Kentucky, concluded that the number has grown tremendously. Among them are Even Start, the new family-focused Head Start programs, Native American Early Childhood/Parental Involvement programs and the American Library Association/Bell Atlantic-sponsored family literacy initiative. The programs that seem to have the most impact are those that are comprehensive and of the longest duration.

## PARENT AND CHILD EDUCATION

The thread that runs through all family literacy programs is the practice associated with the belief that the critical teacher in the child's life is the parent. The comprehensive family literacy program known nationwide is the PACE (*Parent and Child Education*) model, which began in Kentucky in 1986 as a legislative initiative. Only 6 programs were funded that first biennium, but two years later another 12 were started. Today, 34 Parent and Child Education Programs are in place in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The "Kenan Model" (developed with the help of funds from the Kenan Charitable Trust) expanded upon the PACE model, and this intense, effective, four-component model has been replicated over 100 times across the country: in schools, community centers, housing projects and elsewhere.

The program is effective because parents' educational needs are addressed in an environment that reflects an emphasis on communication, student inquiry, learning-to-learn strategies, critical thinking strategies and whole-language operation. Children are right next door in a quality preschool, which emphasizes the child's need to explore and experience, touch and taste, decide and demonstrate. Parents and children join together in an intergenerational learning opportunity called PACT (*parent and child time*). Parents learn the value of play as learning opportunity, and they practice healthy, helpful interaction. During Parent Time, the adults discuss many of the critical issues in their lives, their parenting needs, as well as their dreams and goals for themselves and their children.

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

We at the National Center for Family Literacy have learned many lessons since 1986. One of the most significant is that family literacy programs should operate as models of family strength, recognizing that all families, even those whom service providers consider "at risk," have their strengths and bring positive characteristics to the learning situation.

We believe that families can call upon these strengths in times of crisis or adversity to help them spring back or lean forward. And we believe that the development of literacy skills can aid families' efforts to address their own felt needs and work toward personal and family goals.

Dewey suggested that "the only true education comes through stimulation of one's existing powers by the demands of the social situations which one experiences." If this is true, the task of the true teacher is to create awareness of those powers. A "strengths" model for family literacy puts the parents in possession of their powers and begins to prepare them for a more certain future — a future that can include success for them, their children and whole families.

For family literacy programs to address the needs of whole families, programs need partners — team members who help ensure the success of programs and success of families within those programs. Collaboration among community agencies combines myriad talents as well as scarce funds, preventing a duplication of services and providing a multitude of opportunities.

Libraries and lending institutions, corporations and caring teachers, school boards and social service workers comprise the past of collaborative family literacy programs, a past that is rich with stories of success, a past that details changes in lives. Adults in family literacy programs have acquired new skills and raised self-esteem. Children have benefitted from the gifts of self-discipline and self-worth, bestowed by parents who have learned new behaviors. We have talked about the past and the present of family literacy programs, but what about the promise?

The promise of these programs is that society will be the ultimate beneficiary. We will gain productive citizens, aware of their responsibilities to their children and to the larger community. They will act as role models in smaller family units and in extended arenas.

Failure to pursue this promise may be unfair to disadvantaged children and to their undereducated parents, and it is also unfair to the larger world community. For WE ARE THE WORLD, and we deserve the best we can deliver.

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# A STRONG RECORD: NYLA AND LITERACY

*By Therese L. Broderick*

Several landmark events for literacy and libraries have occurred since 1985: a record $16 million library aid increase was enacted in New York State in 1986; national literacy spokesperson Barbara Bush became First Lady in 1989; the United Nations declared International Literacy Year, NYLA celebrated its Centennial and Congress reauthorized the Library Services and Construction Act in 1990; and, in 1991, literacy was a major theme of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services, and Congress passed the National Literacy Act.

The New York Library Association (NYLA) has played a role in, or has responded to, most of these important developments. It is hard to think of anything that libraries do that does not in some way benefit literacy. Almost every activity of NYLA, at least indirectly, promotes literacy by supporting its member libraries and librarians. This article surveys what NYLA has done in the past few years to strengthen library-based literacy services and collections, legislation and the professional development of literacy librarians. Because it would be impossible to recognize the thousands of individual members who advance the cause of literacy every day on the job, this article focuses instead on the work of the organizational units within NYLA, rather than individuals.

## NYLA SECTIONS

NYLA has over 30 committees, sections and roundtables. Although none of them has "literacy" in its name, the Reference and Adult Services Section (RASS) has a Literacy Focus Group. This Focus Group developed out of the RASS Literacy Committee, which was formed in the 1980s to address the growing importance of literacy in libraries. Members of the Literacy Focus Group meet at the NYLA annual conference, plan conference programs, share information and communicate through the RASS newsletter. The Group's predecessor, the RASS Literacy Committee, endorsed the State Library application for an LSCA Title VI grant to develop *Evaluating Library Literacy Programs: A Manual for Reporting Accomplishments*[1] in 1990-91. The Focus Group reacted to drafts, participated in the regional workshops at which the *Manual* was introduced, and is promoting its use.

RASS is also the only section to offer a literacy award, the "Patrick Fiore Memorial Literacy Grant." This grant is noteworthy because applicants do not have to be librarians or working in libraries; anyone who is providing literacy services within New York State is eligible. Applicants are judged on an essay they write describing their literacy work and on accompanying letters of reference. The winner receives funds to attend his or her first NYLA annual conference and is honored there at the awards ceremony. The recipient of the first Fiore Grant in 1991 was Dennis O'Neil, a tutor and workshop leader with the Albany affiliate of Literacy Volunteers of America. The award is named for Patrick Fiore, who had dedicated his library career to literacy through his work at the Brooklyn Public Library, as Chairperson of the RASS Literacy Committee, and as a leader in American Library Association and Public Library Association literacy programs.

Other sections promote literacy in other important ways. For example, the Public Libraries Section Legislative Committee has both worked for and supported legislation that would provide State funding for library-based literacy projects. The efforts of sections devoted to children and young adults provide a basis for increased literacy. In 1988, Youth Services Section members, in their capacities as youth specialists in public library systems and libraries, helped make a success of the LSCA-sponsored Family Reading Program in 107 libraries in 17 library systems[2] from Barneveld to Queens. With the help of an LSCA Title I grant from the New York State Library's Division of Library Development and the collaboration of other NYLA Youth Services Section leaders, Randall Enos of the Ramapo Catskill Library System recently developed a model of a children's summer reading program for use by libraries across the State. The resulting program, "New York is Reading Country," will be enjoyed by thousands of children in summer 1992. Also, NYLA's School Library Media Section (SLMS) initiated the idea of designating every April as "School Library Media Month." SLMS launched this special month in New York State, and it is now observed across the country.

## THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

One opportunity for different NYLA sections to join forces against illiteracy is the NYLA annual conference. Among the frequent co-sponsors of literacy programs

have been the Reference and Adult Services Section, Public Libraries Section, Youth Services Section, School Library Media Section, Ethnic Services Roundtable, Roundtable of Libraries in Service to Special Populations and the New York State Library.

Since 1985, at least one program about literacy has been arranged at every Conference, and the variety of topics reflects the growing diversity in the field: computer software (1985); public library literacy programs (1986); literacy staff training (1987); funding (1988); family literacy (1988 and 1991); literacy for the homeless (1988); a poster session (1989); and a workplace literacy tour (1990). These programs explore "hot topics," describe new theories and demonstrate effective methods. Usually handouts are distributed with helpful information such as reading lists or names of contact people in successful literacy projects. Promotional material — bookmarks, fliers, brochures, media publicity, handbooks, etc. — are free for the taking at Stop 'N Swap display tables. Finally, literacy publishers show off their latest titles in the exhibits hall. For many of the thousands of librarians who attend, the NYLA annual conference is the best means of finding out about library/literacy projects and to talk with other literacy professionals.

## LEGISLATION

On "Library Day" every March in Albany, hundreds of library advocates from around the State converge on the State Capitol to inform legislators about library issues and to seek their support for library legislation. Bills that will guarantee more money for libraries are always top priority, and some of that money, of course, is channeled into literacy programs. "Library Day" is the culmination of the year's work for the NYLA Legislative Committee. This Committee's annual document, the "Compilation of Needs," states NYLA's program and generates statewide support for legislation to meet those needs, communicating along the way with Assemblymen and Assemblywomen, Senators and the Governor's Office. The 1992 version of the "Compilation of Needs" includes this Objective #12 under the heading of "Concerns of the Entire Library Community":

> "To support an increase in library-based literacy efforts to the widest range of the library's constituent groups, and expand library involvement in community literacy efforts."
>
> Action Steps:

1. Seek permanent funding for library-based literacy programs.
2. Seek full funding of Chapter 917 of the Laws of 1990 and seek annual grants of $50,000 for each public library system to support literacy programs and activities.
3. Seek authorization for grants directly to individual public libraries.
4. Extend present literacy programs to insure they reach all potential library users, regardless of age.[3]

The national counterpart to "Library Day" is "Library Legislative Day" every April in Washington, DC. NYLA has championed the Federal Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), which includes a "Library Literacy Program" (Title VI), support for literacy within "Public Library Services" (Title I), and a new Title VIII, "Library Learning Center Programs" for family literacy.

## THE WHITE HOUSE AND NEW YORK CONFERENCES

Literacy was one of the three main themes of the July 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services. For the 18 months before the White House Conference, each State focussed on the three Conference themes:

> Enhance literacy,
> Increase productivity,
> Strengthen democracy.

In preparation for the August 28, 1990, "Library Super Tuesday Regional Governor's Conferences on Library and Information Services" and the November 1990 New York State Governor's Conference, the Governor's Commission on Libraries held a public hearing on literacy. NYLA members, new readers, literacy students, educators and public officials testified eloquently on literacy needs and needed action. The hearing was held in the Bronx, but testimony came from throughout the State.

At the November Conference, NYLA members helped secure adoption of two key floor resolutions:

- **Statewide library literacy efforts.** (1) The Governor should recognize the role that libraries have taken in battling illiteracy — particularly in forming a partnership with the schools and in selecting/promoting appropriate age level reading materials. (2) New York State should create a position to coordinate and support library literacy efforts. (3) The Governor should provide additional and adequate funding to develop, maintain and expand library literacy and reading programs. (4) The Governor should provide adequate funding to library literacy programs, enabling these programs to recruit and train qualified professional librarians, educators and volunteers. [FCR1102]
- **Support for adult learning, services to children and literacy.** The Governor and the Legislature of New York State and the President and the Congress

of the United States should formally recognize public libraries as educational agencies for lifelong learning by specifically including libraries in all legislation, regulations and policy Statements which provide funding for or otherwise affect adult learning, services to children and efforts to increase literacy. [FCR2006]

The Conference adopted seven other resolutions on literacy:

- **Libraries' role in promoting literacy**. Recognition should be given by our legislators to the importance of ALL libraries — school, public, academic, and special — and the essential job they do in promoting both basic literacy and advanced proficiency; that necessary funds be made available to permit adequate staffs and plants and adequate collections of books, microfilm, computerized information and other appropriate materials. [CR1080]
- **Literacy program for all ages**. The Legislature should support family literacy opportunities by establishing information referral centers to refer patrons (parents) to adjunct social services. Important to their success would be networking with governmental, private and church supported agencies as well as other libraries. [CR1106]
- **Federal legislation needed to fund family literacy programs**. Delegates to the White House Conference on Library and Information Services should call for Federal legislation to fund family literacy programs that involve public libraries and other family-serving agencies. [CR1107]
- **Access to library service**. Libraries must be a key element in the promotion of reading. [CR1111]
- **Literacy: social and economic implications for our State and our Nation**. I. Standards for funding and staffing for school and public libraries need to be established, monitored and maintained. II. School, public libraries, and special libraries need to adapt to local community needs. III. Libraries will network with government, social and business agencies to support libraries in our State. [CR1113]
- **Develop and reinforce literacy skills**. Information literacy requires the cooperation of all types of libraries in the instructional process, and must involve librarians, administrators, professional organizations, and government agencies at all levels — local, State and national. [CR1115]
- **Literacy standards**. The Governor's Conference supports the Regents in establishing literacy standards to be met by every student attending school. [CR3020]

The New York State delegation to the White House Conference developed a platform based on these and other resolutions and took to the White House 11 priorities. The first of these was:

> To obtain recognition of and funding for libraries as the lead agency in addressing the nation's literacy problems in the neighborhoods and the prisons.

Following the Governor's and White House Conferences, the NYLA President and Council established an Implementation Committee for the White House Conference on Library and Information Services, chaired by Frances Roscello, NYLA President in 1989-90. This Committee leads NYLA's efforts to ensure that the resolutions passed at the second White House Conference on Library and Information Services in July 1991 are eventually realized by the Federal government. In early 1992, the NYLA Implementation Committee circulated copies of the 97 recommendations adopted at the White House Conference to NYLA sections and asked them to identify their top concerns. The responses of the Sections will help determine NYLA-wide priorities for the future.

## THE CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE

NYLA's efforts on behalf of literacy since 1985 have been so varied and so vigorous that they are matched only by the growing magnitude of the illiteracy problem our State and communities face. There is one link in the library/literacy connection that needs special attention and strengthening: the link between NYLA and the recipients of library/literacy services. NYLA might consider inviting literacy students to join the association and voice their own concerns. Adult learners could attend the annual conference, write for the *NYLA Bulletin* or for the section newsletters, and contribute to special projects. If this goal is pursued and met, then the next *Bookmark* article on NYLA and literacy several years from now will have even more exciting and worthwhile achievements to report.

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**1992 ADULT LITERACY SERVICES GRANTS**

For the first time since 1986, the Legislature in 1992 appropriated $83,500 in State aid earmarked for public library literacy services — 24 libraries and library systems submitted applications totaling $287,643. Following analysis of the proposals by a panel of reviewers, the Division of Library Development made grants for 11 projects. In each project, the library cooperated with another literacy provider — a school, literacy volunteer organization, a county jail, a BOCES or a community organization. The projects were:

**Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System**, $6,420, to provide in-service training for tutors on learning disabilities, computer-assisted instruction and other topics.

**Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System**, $18,560, for adult literacy tutoring services in Saranac Lake, Tupper Lake, Lake Placid and surrounding rural areas.

**Huntington Public Library** (member, Suffolk Cooperative Library System), $2,000, to add ESL materials to serve its growing Hispanic and Haitian-Creole populations.

**Liverpool Public Library** (member, Onondaga County Public Library), $1,144, to begin a conversational English program in Liverpool, modeled on those operated by the system with LSCA Title I funds.

**Mid-Hudson Library System**, $6,438, to expand computer-based literacy instruction in Dutchess, Putnam and Ulster counties.

**Mid-York Library System**, $2,825, to conduct additional tutor-training workshops, purchase materials for tutors to use, and disseminate flyers and newsletters.

**Nassau Library System**, $8,000, to support the purchase of close-captioned videos and close-captioned decoders for use with adult new learners.

**The New York Public Library**, $16,440, to support four ESL classes and two "Basic Education in Native Language" classes in Spanish at Fordham Library Center (Bronx), Inwood Regional Branch Library (Manhattan) and Fort Washington Branch Library (Manhattan).

**Onondaga County Public Library**, $5,007, to place permanent collections of adult new reader materials in a number of library sites.

**Southern Adirondack Library System**, $3,000, to sponsor study groups for experienced volunteer tutors in Warren and Washington counties to explore teaching techniques and provide a forum for tutor support and problem solving.

**Upper Hudson Library System**, $13,666, to provide classroom literacy instruction, with tutor follow-up upon release, to inmates of the Rensselaer County and Albany County jails — tutors will be specially recruited and trained, allowing learners to begin while incarcerated at short-term facilities and continue after release.

Public library systems each year also use State aid coordinated outreach funds for literacy services. In 1991, 12 public library systems used $257,087 in LSCA Title I funds to provide 158,787 hours of tutoring to 3,229 students! If volunteers who provided that literacy assistance had been paid the minimal amount of $8 per hour, the tutoring services would have cost a total of $1.3 million!

# ONONDAGA REACHES OUT

*By Bruce E. Daniels, Sari Feldman and Milena M. Hansen*

With a history of literacy efforts spanning over 30 years, Syracuse is often called the literacy capital of the world. Both Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy International operate from headquarters in Syracuse. It is natural that Onondaga County Public Library has maintained a close working relationship with both organizations. The Library's vision of its role in addressing the literacy problem in Syracuse and suburban and rural communities in Onondaga County has evolved from one of supporting the literacy efforts of other organizations to that of a catalyst for developing new programs.

We began by providing assistance to literacy organizations and individuals who served as tutors. In 1983, with funding from a Library Services and Construction Act grant, we launched our formal Literacy Project to acquaint tutors and students with the services that Onondaga County Public Library (OCPL) has to offer. With the offices of Literacy Volunteers of Greater Syracuse occupying leased space in one of OCPL's city branch libraries, daily contact between the Library's Literacy Coordinator and the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Syracuse staff have facilitated the integration of library services and literacy services. Project staff have been regular participants in tutor-training sessions, promoting, in particular, the use of public access microcomputers in literacy tutoring. Students and teachers, through "hospitality" tours of the Central Library, have learned about the Library's Adult New Reader collection, the English-as-a-Second-Language collection, the System80 (a machine that teaches basic skills in reading and math to students at or below a fifth-grade reading level), the Education and Job Information Center, and the foreign language collections. In June 1992, Literacy Volunteers of Greater Syracuse awarded to OCPL its Robert J. Colvin Award for Outstanding Support and Service.

The Literacy Project, in addition, has produced a number of publications aimed at literacy students and tutors. The InfoToGo booklets have provided information on holidays in America, looking for a job, City and County services, and library services. Project staff also wrote a guide for tutors describing literacy resources in the community and providing tips on how to tutor. The writings of adult new readers have also been collected annually and published.

Moving beyond this supporting role, OCPL in 1987 launched its Family Literacy program. The program has had two components — an English conversation club for adults and a concurrent storyhour for their preschoolers. When the program was planned, staff knew that there were many women in the community with small children and without transportation, who therefore spent their days by themselves. The intent of the program has been to provide these newcomers with an informal setting to practice their English skills, to provide them with referrals to other English-as-a-Second-Language providers and to introduce them to the public library as the place where they could turn for their information needs. Over the years, the program has been very successful. The sessions now follow a formal curriculum designed to teach English and to develop the concept of using the public library for solving the problems of everyday life. In 1991, the Family Literacy program had 420 sessions with over 1,800 people attending. Individuals who have participated in the program have found the sessions very useful and have offered the following comments:

> "In my country, librarians only check out books. But here they seem to know a response to every question I come up with; they know exactly where to go to find out the answer, and they can send you to an agency complete with a contact name and a phone number."
>
> "I wish I could go back to Korea, become a librarian and work toward changing the Korean libraries so they would be more like American."
>
> From a Chinese woman looking for a nursing program: "Before I came to the library, I did not know where to turn: nobody knew what to do with me and everybody was sending me on to someone else. But at the library, they connected me with the Education and Job Information Center and they, in turn, gave me the name of the place where I got all my answers so I knew where I stood. It was like emerging from the dark into the light."

Since 1982, we have annually compiled and published information about local literacy providers and their services in the *Literacy Directory*. These contacts laid the foundation for Project ABLE (Accelerating Business Literacy Education), a workforce literacy project supported by a Library Services and Construction Act Title VI

grant. The program staff produced a directory of workplace literacy programs nationwide, a pamphlet on conducting a workforce literacy program and a bibliography of a core collection of materials.

## MOVING BEYOND REMEDIATION: INFLUENCING EARLY CHILDHOOD AND REACHING PARENTS

In 1991, recognizing that more needed to be done in sharing information and resources, OCPL convened a meeting of all literacy-based organizations in Onondaga County with the purpose of forming a county-wide coalition. Over 40 organizations have become participants in the coalition. Foremost on their agenda area: coordinating efforts to prevent duplication of services; developing programs to fulfill unmet needs; and establishing a central literacy hotline.

Up to this time, OCPL's efforts to address the literacy problem have been of a remedial nature. The programs have been focused at adults who are no longer in the formal educational system. We believe that if illiteracy is to be eradicated, preventive efforts must be developed as a part of a total effort to eliminate illiteracy. Currently, we are developing a program that will focus on developing the foundation for literacy skills in young children from the time of birth.

OCPL was invited to team up with the State University of New York's (SUNY) Health Science Center University Hospital Pediatric Outpatient Clinic and design a project based on the *Reach Out and Read* (R.O.A.R.) program at Boston City Hospital. The Syracuse program — *Ready, Set, Read* — is designed for economically and educationally disadvantaged families. It will promote reading aloud to children from birth because it is an essential part of language development, nurturing, learning to read and creating the love of reading.

Through this program, OCPL will provide training for health care professionals, including SUNY Health Science Center resident physicians, provide deposit collections of age-appropriate books for infants through preschoolers, and develop promotional materials to distribute to parents and health care providers. Health care professionals and resident physicians will discuss reading aloud at each "well child checkup" beginning at birth. A selected group of families, approximately 100 at each site, will be given an age-appropriate book at each well child checkup to reinforce the importance and pleasure of reading aloud. Follow-up by the health care professionals and resident physicians at subsequent well child checkups will also provide reinforcement.

## THE HEALTH CARE AGENCY IS AN IMPORTANT PARTNER

It has not been easy for public libraries to reach educationally and economically disadvantaged families. If any community service or agency is likely to connect with "at-risk" families, it is the health care agency. By linking family literacy to preventative health care, the OCPL literacy program hopes significantly to influence the school readiness of children in years to come. We are currently seeking funds for materials and staff to present story hours at the clinics and to expand and replicate the project at St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center Outpatient Pediatric Services and the Westside Family Health Clinic, located at the site of Syracuse Neighborhood Based Initiative.

*Ready, Set, Read* is both prescriptive, identifying parents in need of literacy services and linking them to area programs, and preventative, stopping the cycle of illiteracy by an early and positive introduction to reading and books. The project will also reach child care workers and home care providers through in-service training and promotional materials. We are planning to have promotional materials in each new-parent packet at the three major hospitals and birth centers in Onondaga County. There is the potential to reach over 9,000 families with an important and positive message about reading and libraries.

We began our involvement with literacy efforts in a very traditional manner. Over the years, as its literacy efforts have evolved, OCPL has become an activist agency in the fight against illiteracy. To stop the pattern of developing future generations who cannot or will not read, OCPL believes it must be involved with the early development of a child and involved often in promoting books and reading. OCPL is committed to playing a very active role in the essential efforts aimed at eradicating illiteracy before the end of this century.

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# BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS IN LIBRARY LITERACY PROGRAMS

*By Roger Dovner*

> Learning is usually social; we learn very little on our own. Without a community, people have less desire to write or to read.[1]

Library literacy programs are traditionally thought of as places where students meet with volunteers in one-to-one situations, often having very limited opportunities to work with other students or tutors. In some programs, this kind of separateness has been encouraged because it has been thought that this arrangement actually contributes to the anonymity and privacy that has been the hallmark of one-to-one library literacy programs. However, some exciting things are happening in literacy programs that believe that offering opportunities for students and tutors to interact and collaborate with others is crucial to the literacy acquisition of adult learners.

The three public library systems in New York City — The New York, Queens Borough and Brooklyn public libraries — have conducted extensive literacy programs since the mid-1970s. Each has a history of offering more than training and space for volunteers and students; each has made a commitment to providing students with opportunities to be involved as a community of learners.

Since 1984, a substantial amount of city funding to literacy services in New York City has supported the three library systems in providing a very rich array of services for adult beginning readers and literacy programs. Literacy programs in the three systems provide instruction to adult beginning readers and writers through one-to-one and small group tutoring and classes. All three systems also sponsor English classes for speakers of other languages. In addition, each literacy program has extensive collections of books, tapes and videos that are loaned to learners, adult literacy practitioners and the general public. Classroom-size collections of books are available as deposit loans to the large number of literacy programs in New York City — a great service to these programs since many of them have historically had limited funds to purchase materials their students need. Computer-assisted instruction is also provided at all of the library programs in New York City to any interested learner.

When viewed alone, the comprehensive services provided by these programs make them special. Yet these programs go one step further. They make efforts to involve program participants in activities and structure their programs in ways that develop a strong sense of community among participants.

Inherent in the way these programs operate is the belief that language and language learning is social [2] and that literacy acquisition occurs in meaningful social contexts where students interact with each other and are supported in their emerging literacy by a sense of being part of a community with a common goal. "We develop our language in a myriad number of different social contexts. We learn to speak and listen as we interact with other people, and we, likewise, learn to write and read as we connect with other writers and readers."[3]

In establishing a sense of community, these programs have made attempts to share control and decision making in lessons and have placed a priority on helping learners to feel safe and to take risks in their learning. Dialogue among students and between learners and tutors is a crucial element in these programs and participation in lessons and program activities is valued.

*Learners have input in their lessons, take risks with language and interact with others.*

But how does this sense of community manifest itself in these programs and how do these programs create community? Each of the three library programs in New York City has done similar kinds of things to generate community in their programs. What they have in common is a set of beliefs about the teaching of reading and writing that encourages student participation, a trend toward a small group model of instruction in their tutorials, an attempt to work with staff and volunteers in ways that encourage their participation and a range of whole program offerings, activities and events that allow program participants to feel as though they are an integral part of a community.

## INSTRUCTION

Each of the three library literacy programs describes its program's philosophy as student-centered. In this framework, students' goals and interests are of critical importance in shaping the instruction they receive. From the very first time students meet with staff during

the intake process, they are involved in deciding what they will learn. Students are encouraged to speak about their goals and interests; these will ultimately inform the curriculum. Each of these programs believes that it is important to tie instruction to students' interests and goals so that they can see the relevance of reading and writing to their lives.

The instructional philosophies of these programs draw from whole language pedagogy, which encourages learners to have input in their lessons, take risks with language and interact with others. Whole language is based on the premise that reading, writing, speaking and listening are taught as integrated language arts. Learners do extensive reading and writing on subjects of interest to them. Reading authentic materials such as books, magazines and newspapers — not workbooks or texts designed to do skill work — is a focus. Students are encouraged to experiment with writing, not to get bogged down with spelling or conventions when they write drafts. They learn to share materials they read and pieces they write and get feedback from others. The instruction encourages a dialogue among participants.

At The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing, for example, instruction begins with group members collaborating to identify group and individual goals. Together they negotiate how lesson time will be spent. Students choose their own books and they learn how their prior knowledge of a subject can help them read. They also select their own writing topics and are encouraged to take risks with their writing, to share writing with each other and get feedback from others in the group. Instruction from whole language principles encourages students to feel vested in their literacy learning and to feel part of a community.

## GROUPS AND COMMITTEES WORK

Group work is a focus at all of the literacy programs in the New York City library systems. The commitment to facilitating a sense of community by encouraging program participants to collaborate and share decision-making is evidenced in the way these programs conduct their tutoring, train their volunteer tutors and develop the professional expertise of their staff.

These literacy programs have made a decision to move away from matching students exclusively in one-to-one tutoring pairs with volunteers. Although none of the programs has entirely abandoned one-to-one instruction since each sees a need to try to honor particular requests from students who only want this kind of arrangement, the general thrust of these programs has been to match 2-5 students with a single tutor or 2 tutors with 5-10 students. These programs believe that there are critical instructional benefits that students experience when they are able to interact with other learners. Central to this understanding is the belief that when students are able to read, write and discuss subjects of interest as a part of a group they learn from each other, they realize that they know more than they think do, and they gain confidence and support from being a part of a community of learners.[4] One New York Public Library student described her work in her group as: "It's like a team, we used to call one another up on the phone to spell a word or something."[5]

Tutors and staff are also encouraged to participate in groups and to have input in these programs. In many of the New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing, tutors meet regularly in groups to share their concerns and support each other's work. Their input is solicited by staff to plan in-service tutor training activities. The staff at these library literacy programs are also involved in collaborative work that helps to strengthen their professional expertise, provides a conduit for their input in program planning and fosters a community spirit.

*Students realize that they know more than they think do, and they gain confidence and support from being a part of a community of learners.*

Staff at the Queens Borough Public Library Adult Learning Centers do a great deal of committee work as does staff at The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing. Both programs have committees to explore alternative assessment and uses of video. The New York Public Library also has a few others: their education issues committee embraces staff's concerns and interests in their development as teachers of reading and writing. Their family literacy committee meets to explore issues in family literacy and to identify ways to address family literacy needs in their program.

In each of the examples described, these programs formed groups based on concerns addressed by staff. This approach parallels their learner-centered approach in which instruction is planned around what students want to learn.

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN TUTOR TRAINING

Student participation is also an important component in the training of volunteers at these literacy programs. When students are involved in the training of tutors they discover that they are part of a larger learning community. They realize that their tutors are learners too. Though each of the library systems has used different

and evolving training models over the years, each has included students in the training of tutors.

The Queens Borough Public Library Adult Learning Centers continue to invite students who have been in the program to training sessions so that they may share with new tutor-trainees their expectations and experiences learning to read in the program.

The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing conduct their training with both new students and tutors together. This model, which they call a practicum, allows students and tutors to work collaboratively on reading, writing and learning and teaching strategies. In the practicum, everyone is allowed to learn the instructional approaches together. In this way, the reading and writing process and how we learn is demystified for students.

## STUDENT COUNCILS AND CLUBS

Student councils and committees are examples of other kinds of student involvement that characterize community at these programs. The Brooklyn Public Library Adult Literacy Program has had a student council for over eight years. The idea of a student council was supported by a small grant from "Time and Life" and started with only seven students and three staff members. Today the council has grown to include members from all five of the Brooklyn Public Library 's Learning Centers. Students elect officers and a standing executive planning committee. The council holds monthly meetings, which are open to all students. The meetings are devoted to discussions about community awareness, issues about learning, problems at Learning Centers and social activities. In this group, students have the opportunity to have input in program planning; they provide feedback about workshops and program activities they have attended and make suggestions to solve program dilemmas, such as organizing buddy systems to grapple with the problem of student attendance. The council works to bring the Learning Centers' community together with the larger neighborhood communities. Guest speakers from organizations from local neighborhoods are invited to speak about important issues and services their agencies provide. As a result, several Brooklyn Public Library students have become involved in community work. The group organizes a yearly voters' registration drive, social functions and publishes a student council newsletter. They have also been responsible for conducting fundraising activities to support the work of the Literacy Program and recently raised $3,330 from an art auction to hire instructors to lead tutor-training workshops.

At Queens Borough Public Library, student involvement is embodied in their program component called "Students Helping Students." Student committees meet at all five Library Learning Centers and function in a similar way to the student council at Brooklyn Public Library. Here though, another purpose of the committees is to supplement the instruction through peer tutoring. Students are encouraged to study together, to read and write with each other and to identify topics that they can explore with peers.

Video clubs at Queen Borough Public Library add to the spirit of community at their Centers. In this unique component, students are made to feel as if they belong to a club where they have an opportunity to explore topics that they would like to learn more about through video. The clubs meet on Saturdays at selected Centers and involve both English-as-a-Second-Language and basic education students in viewing and discussing videos on a range of subjects of interest to members.

*When students are involved in the training of tutors they discover that they are part of a larger learning community.*

## PUBLICATIONS

Publications are a tangible representation of the collaborative work of program participants and provide a way for learners to communicate with others through print. Each of the three library literacy programs produces publications that vividly depict their community spirit. Students and tutors not only contribute writing for these publications, but are often involved in varying aspects of their production such as choice of theme, design and layout. Brooklyn Public Library publishes "The Key," a newsletter for all its program participants that includes updates on program events, tips for tutors and writing by students. Their "Student World Newspaper," includes student art, recipes, reviews of books and movies and pieces written by students.

The Queens Borough Public Library Adult Learning Centers publish "Tutor Talk," a magazine for tutors and "Open Door," a collection of students' success stories. Their writing classes also publish eight-nine journals a year.

The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing publish two-three journals of students' writing at every one of their eight learning centers each year. These publications are disseminated to all of their centers with the goal of fostering a sense of a larger community of learners among their program participants.

## PROGRAM-WIDE ACTIVITIES

Each of the three library literacy programs conducts a range of stimulating program-wide activities that encourage participants from all of their centers to join and enjoy. These activities generate a sense of being part of a community of learners.

Both Queens Borough Public Library and Brooklyn Public Library sponsor "National Issues Forum," discussions where for several weeks students have an opportunity to discuss National Issues Forum topics such as this year's topic, "America's Role in the World." Past topics include: The Census; Drugs: Breaking the Habit; Patients' Rights; Who's Running the City; and Citizenship. Participants at Centers meet in small discussion groups so that each student is given an opportunity to share her opinion and then gather for a final forum to further explore these issues. A final summation and recommendation for political leaders are assembled and forwarded to the Kettering Foundation Census Poll.

The New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing and Brooklyn Public Library have sponsored whole program writing workshops for students (and tutors at The New York Public Library) where everyone from a center (including other centers) is encouraged to choose a topic to write about, write it and share it in small groups. The goal is to bring people from different groups together to share ideas and encourage collaboration.

*Students and tutors require a space that belongs to them.*

## CELEBRATIONS AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Each of these programs recognizes the value of student and tutor recognition events and cultural activities at their programs as effective ways to generate a sense of community among participants. Celebrations are often considered the highlight of the year at programs.

Brooklyn Public Library sponsors an event called "Tribute to Tutors" where volunteer tutors are recognized for their contribution and hard work to help adults learn to read and write. At this event, students demonstrate their appreciation by planning entertainment, small gifts, speeches and refreshments.

Queens Borough Public Library celebrates students' achievements and tutors' contributions at a yearly "Student and Tutor Recognition Luncheon" held at one of their learning centers. The event includes opportunities for tutors and students to speak about their experiences and successes.

Each of the eight learning centers at The New York Public Library conducts one or more learning celebrations where students bring family, friends and food to share in recognizing their efforts and achievements. At these events, coordinated with the publishing of centers' journals, students and tutors take turns reading pieces each has contributed to the journal. The celebrations culminate in the presentation of certificates of achievement to program participants.

To extend students' literacy acquisition beyond the classroom and to involve them in a shared cultural experience, each of the three libraries' literacy programs organizes group trips to plays, short story readings and museums. Often students, tutors and staff meet during or after regular sessions to visit such places as the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan and Brooklyn Museums, to hear dramatic readings of short stories at Symphony Space or to attend performances by such renowned theater groups as the Negro Ensemble Company. These kinds of activities help unite program participants in an appreciation of art, language and performance.

There is a social aspect to every community. All of the activities these programs offer, including the instruction, have a social element. Literacy programs in the three library systems capitalize on this to help forge relationships among participants. However, there are some activities that they conduct solely for the purpose of bringing program participants together to have fun. An example of this are the program picnics that students, tutors and staff at Brooklyn Public Library and Queens Borough Public Library organize each year. Students at Brooklyn Public Library have organized "Family Day" in the same area of Prospect Park for the past several years. At this event, students, tutors, staff, families and friends get a chance to relax or participate in activities such as the annual softball game between tutors and students.

## LEARNING CENTER ENVIRONMENT

A component of community involves the physical space in which members meet. Each of the literacy programs in the three library systems has made special efforts to create, to the extent possible, places where students can meet that are separate from the public library space. Each program believes that students and tutors require a space that belongs to them. These program spaces create by their existence a community area. They have tables where groups can meet and talk, not rows of desks as in traditional classrooms. The rooms are often surrounded by books, computers, posters and plants. There are often displays of students' writing and photographs of program participants. The Seward Park Center at the New York Public Library Centers for Reading and Writing has a bulletin board they call "Authors

Corner" where students can display writing in progress and develop a readership before these pieces are published. Students are encouraged to write notes to these authors and drop them in small envelopes beneath each piece. One site advisor at New York Public Library describing the feeling at her center says "Community is important to us. New students sometimes ask when a photograph of them will go up on the wall to join the photos of everyone else who comes here. People feel comfortable, like this is a second home."[6] Clearly these programs have worked hard to make participants feel like they are a community.

A community sense develops through shared experiences and a common purpose among members. These literacy programs have achieved a community sense at their literacy programs through a group work structure, a belief in the social nature of language and literacy acquisition and a commitment to involving participants in their own learning.

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# LITERACY SERVICES IN RURAL LIBRARIES

*By Leona Salzman*

Picture yourself as the "average" librarian in a rural public library in upstate New York. You serve a population of under 4,000 individuals. Your total annual book budget is under $5,000. You have an annual serials budget of under $1,000 and no budget for audiovisual purchases. One part-time support staff member and a small corps of volunteers (including library trustees) assist you with library operations and programs. You strongly believe that the library should be the "hub" of the community, and your mission is to provide equal access to information for all the residents of your community. You realize that some community members face an overwhelming barrier to equity in information access — that barrier is illiteracy. Faced with the dilemma of accomplishing your mission of information access for all, but with limited financial and staff resources available to do so, how can you serve the needs of the nonreaders in your library community?

The need to close the gap between literacy and illiteracy is nearly universal. It presents a challenge to all libraries, regardless of their size and location. As educational institutions, libraries need to assign a high priority to literacy programs and services because literacy is essential for a healthy society and economy. A library, rural or urban, can select from a wide range of literacy activities. These activities can generally be categorized as: materials provision; library services; and cooperative efforts. Decisions on which activities the rural public library offers depend upon the appropriateness of the activities to community needs, the educational role that the library establishes for itself, and its interest and resourcefulness in delivering library literacy services. The following is a representative sampling of practical activities that can be undertaken by small libraries with limited resources, focused on activities in support of local literacy providers.

## MATERIALS

For small libraries, where budgets may preclude the purchase of materials, there are alternatives. A library can evaluate its current holdings for print materials appropriate for use by or with adult new readers. These may include leisure reading, textbooks, life/coping skills materials (i.e., children's books, money management, health care), instructional methods and teaching aids. Once identified, these available materials can be collected and placed in a separate collection area within the library, shared as a deposit collection or be included in a bibliography for use at local adult education provider sites. Locally produced materials, written by staff, instructors, tutors and students, can be included in the collection, accomplishing both access to literacy materials and recognition of the individuals who produced them.

When selecting materials for purchase, consider materials that may meet the needs of both the general library clientele and literacy students or instructors. Bibliographies can be compiled to promote use of the collection and build awareness of available resources. If funds are available to purchase additional literacy materials, it will be important to set priorities for collection development based on a needs assessment. Where did gaps exist when the current holdings were evaluated? Are sufficient funds available to consider audiocassette and other audiovisual material purchases as well as print resources? Is there a need for English-as-a-Second-Language materials?

## SERVICES AT THE LIBRARY

Providing space for one-to-one tutoring is a basic service that most libraries can accommodate. This is an important library service because many literacy students and tutors need to avoid the distractions that can occur when instruction takes place in the home. A quiet corner in the library can prove to be the most effective location for their tutoring sessions. If space allows (particularly if a separate room is available), group tutoring sessions, tutor training sessions and adult education classes can also be conducted at the library. Library staff or volunteers can provide library orientation tours to students and tutors as part of their library visits. They can acquaint the students and instructors not only with specific literacy collections and services but with the full range of library activities available to them. Literacy students can be issued library cards to encourage independent and continued use of the library.

Gathering basic information in the form of brochures and other printed matter on local adult education opportunities enables a library to enhance its reference services and creates the foundation for the development of expanded information and referral services. By providing this service the library fulfills a liaison role, assisting

adult learners and potential tutors to locate appropriate literacy service providers. This service role can be expanded by accumulating more specific information from local literacy providers for the purpose of referrals and by following up on the results of the referrals to determine their effectiveness.

*The library can establish a strong foundation for literacy services by removing the mystique of the library as an institution established to serve "skilled readers only."*

Publicizing literacy services and literacy issues can easily be incorporated into the library's regular public information efforts. The display of posters and the distribution of brochures are commonplace activities that can yield very positive results. Table top displays can be created that promote literacy collections and services and advocate the need for literacy education. Local literacy providers can be invited to present public programs. Libraries can make presentations to community groups and prepare public service announcements about their library literacy activities. The library can arrange for programs on topics with general appeal, such as child care, health care and family reading, and can extend special invitations to local literacy programs.

## COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

The key element in effective cooperation is communication. For cooperative efforts to be successful, the organizations involved need to keep each other informed of their respective activities. The means of communication is secondary to the constancy of the information exchange. Communication conveyed through mailings, telephone calls and occasional personal contacts can be just as effective as regular structured meetings and are much easier to carry out, particularly in rural areas where libraries and adult education providers are frequently located miles away from each other. The simple action of sharing information on a regular basis can lead to a variety of mutually beneficial joint endeavors. Some of the benefits that can result from cooperation include shared personnel, financial and materials resources, increased publicity, referrals and idea exchanges. Following are some examples of cooperative efforts: contributions to newsletters, open houses, cosponsorship of tutor training sessions, joint awareness and publicity campaigns and coordinated requests for funding to expand literacy services.

## GETTING STARTED

Before initiating any of these activities, a library should set goals and objectives for its library literacy program. Goals should reflect not only the need for literacy services, but also the library's ability to accomplish them. There are many sources of help as a library begins its needs assessment and explores possible goals and services. Library system staff, publications and the experience of others are among them. This year, small grants under the literacy program in Chapter 917 of the *Laws of 1990* are helping libraries develop and expand literacy programs.

As with any library-based program, it is best to establish a strong foundation for growth and build upon activities as time and resources allow. Create that strong foundation by removing the mystique of the library as an institution established to serve "skilled readers only." Help adult learners in your community feel a sense of value, comfort, responsibility and ownership regarding their local public library, and they will be dedicated library users long after their visits to the library for literacy instruction have ended.

**Leona Salzman** *is Director of the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System in Plattsburgh, NY. She has served as a member of the "New York — You Can Read" Committee and the State Literacy Planning Committee. On a regional level, Ms. Salzman has served as a board member and officer of Literacy Volunteers of Clinton County, coordinator of the Project Literacy U.S. Task Force and chair of the North County Literacy Coalition. She coordinates library literacy programs for the System and its member libraries. She is a member of the Federal Library Services and Construction Act Advisory Council.*

# American Library Association Best of the Best for Children

> "The ALA has once again performed a magnificent service: *Best of the Best for Children* will, I think, become required reading for the parents and the teachers of America's children...." — Johnathan Kozol
>
> "The *American Library Association Best of the Best for Children* is a very positive investment in the future....Reading, which is the first step towards freedom and positive independent thinking, will be much more exciting." — Wally "Famous" Amos

Childhood should be a journey of unlimited choices and clear guidance. But with the explosion in books, games, videos, magazines, computer software and travel experiences targeted to children, how can parents sift the good from the bad, the intriguing from the boring?

In the first of a series of consumer reference books in conjunction with the American Library Association (ALA), Random House will publish the *American Library Association Best of the Best for Children* (October 1992, $20.00 trade paper, $30.00 hardcover-library binding). Edited by Denise Perry Donavin, the reference is a guide to some 1,500 of the very best adventures for children handpicked from tens of thousands of items reviewed during the past five years.

There are scores of "best of" guides for children, but this is the first to recommend outstanding choices from the complete range of new children's items, and to do so under the guidance of the ALA, the world's oldest and largest library organization. Drawing on librarians' expertise in children's media, everyday experiences with children and parents of all walks of life and exposure to new products and professional exchange of views, the ALA represents one of the most informed and dedicated children's resources in America.

Although libraries are traditionally associated with books, a browse through any children's collection in today's libraries or bookstores reveals an incredibly diverse selection of children's "media" — all sorts of things to read, see, hear and interact with — each aimed at stimulating young minds.

Still, books are the heart of the guide. The *American Library Association Best of the Best for Children* cross-references various media listings with related books (often the original source for many of the items) that can be used to reinforce each item's experience. For example, in connection with *Harry Comes Home*, an award-winning video recommended for ages four to adult, the guide suggests *Harry the Dirty Dog* and *Harry and the Lady Next Door* as two books that will provide additional enlightenment for a child. The guide lists all the information needed to obtain recommended items, including, for books, publisher, publication date, and paperback and hardbound prices.

The guide's sections cover books, magazines, videos, audio music and storytelling, computer software, toys and travel. Except for travel adventures, each section is generally subdivided by age level: infants and toddlers (birth to age 2), preschoolers (ages 3-5), early graders (ages 6-8), middle graders (ages 9-11) and teenagers (ages 12-14). Besides gathering materials by age groups, the guide also gives a suggested age range for every individual item, reflecting the great variation in children's interests and readiness.

The *American Library Association Best of the Best for Children* is part of an ongoing effort by the Association and its youth divisions to identify the highest quality materials to delight, enlighten, develop and empower children, as well as to encourage family learning activities. A leading advocate of the "right to know" for all people, regardless of age, the association actively opposes any efforts other than parental guidance to restrict children's access to materials in a library's collection.

For more information, contact Random House representative Donald Lehr at (212) 779-0700.

**Adult illiteracy is both this country's concealed shame and its Achilles' heel.** Its extent is either underestimated or, more often, overlooked. Yet the consequences are everywhere evident. One in five adult Americans cannot read or write and cannot function in a modern, information-based society; hence, they are excluded from the information age. They cannot read a want ad, fill out a job application, manage a bank account, or read their children's report cards. The tragedy is not just personal — the inability of a large number of our neighbors to participate in any meaningful way in the economic life of the community and being deprived of the pleasures of reading — but it has national consequences as well. The large pool of functionally illiterate adults makes it impossible for this country to compete effectively in the global chase for markets and economic expansion. In Germany and Japan, for example, illiteracy rates are below five percent, and those countries have work forces that can adapt quickly to the changing technologies of the age. The United Nations lists the United States as 49th of the 156 member nations in literacy, a drop of 18 places since 1950. To be sure, these figures are open to all kinds of questions and qualifications, but they are a clear indication that the nation that once led the world into universal literacy has lost its commanding position.

Richard C. Wade, Chairman of the Governor's Commission on Libraries, 1990-92

## COMING IN *The Bookmark*

The next issue of *The Bookmark* will include Regents Advisory Council on Libraries Report to the Board of Regents Cultural Education Committee in May 1992, the Summary and Evaluation of the New York State LSCA Program, FY 1991, and library service developments in summer 1992. The Fall 1992 issue will report on electronic doorway library developments in New York State.

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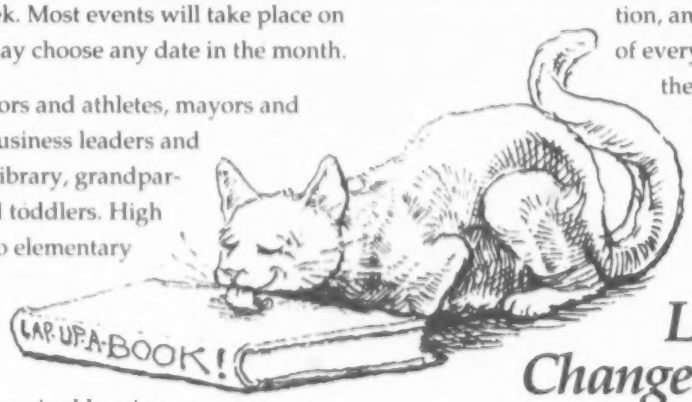
# *April '93*
## The Great New York ReadAlouds

On Wednesday, April 21, 1993, thousands of public, school, and academic libraries in New York State will be the setting for one of the country's largest literacy events. Men and women of all ages, children, and teenagers will gather for programs that audiences call "magical," "inspiring," "informative," "rewarding," and "fun." The programs will feature a timeless source of entertainment and education — a reader and a book.

This will be the fourth year for the Great New York ReadAlouds that are a part of a countrywide celebration of National Library Week. Most events will take place on April 21, but a library may choose any date in the month.

Readers include authors and athletes, mayors and radio talk show hosts, business leaders and firefighters. In a public library, grandparents read to pajama-clad toddlers. High school students return to elementary schools to read to classes.




Readers use sign language for people with impaired hearing, and talking book readers tell sighted audiences how much books mean in their lives. College faculty read their own poetry and selections from favorite books. Members of the State Senate and Assembly read favorite books on video for showing in libraries in their districts.

Mrs. Matilda Cuomo, New York's First Lady, has served each year as honorary chair for the ReadAlouds. The events have grown in popularity with the number of participating libraries in 1992 jumping 11 percent over the previous year.

Community organizations often join a library to cosponsor a ReadAloud. Gaylord Information Systems contributes colorful posters designed for New York State, and local businesses sometimes print programs or supply refreshments. Volunteers help plan and promote the ReadAlouds and serve as celebrity readers. Spin-offs include exhibits of favorite books, posters featuring photographs of readers, and writing workshops with participants reading their new works.

The ReadAlouds produce many benefits — vivid demonstrations of the joy of reading, the sharing of an experience that usually is solitary, and a focus on libraries and books as sources of information, inspiration, and entertainment for readers of every age. But the main benefit is the reward (unknown to others) that each listener and reader receives.

***Libraries Change Lives***

### ReadAloud Sponsors

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*New York State Literacy Council*
*New York State Reading Association*
*New York State School Boards Association*
*New York State Senate Subcommittee on Libraries*
*New York State United Teachers*
*United University Professions*

# Summertime '93

## Book Banquet

For the fortunate child who knows the pleasure good books bring, reading at any time of the year is fun. But summer reading brings two other benefits. One is that reading in summer is the **best** way to maintain vocabulary and comprehension skills during the months a child is not in school.[1] And a second benefit of summer reading is the expansion of a child's knowledge, the basis for all future learning.[2]

Studies have shown that the more students read, the better they read,[3] and that a child should read at least an hour a day during the summer.[4] With all the attractions of outdoor fun, what will make a child, especially one who is not an avid reader, want to read at least an hour a day? For many children, the public library, through its summer reading program, is both the motivation for a child's reading and the source of entertaining books.

In 1993, for the second year, the New York State Library will sponsor a statewide summer reading program in public libraries. The theme, "Book Banquet," and amusing illustrations by Steven Kellogg, popular author and illustrator, should stimulate appetites for reading. Each library plans it own program and can order colorful posters, reading records, achievement certificates, and bookmarks.

To encourage all children to join (especially reluctant readers), libraries help children set their own reading goals instead of requiring a set number of books. Libraries encourage participation by children in hospitals, families of migrant workers, and residents of housing projects. A preschool child may enroll with an adult partner. In some communities, summer reading flyers and books may be in such languages as Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, or Korean, as well as English.

For children with impaired hearing, story hours are signed. And the New York State Library for the Blind and Visually Handicapped supplies children's books on tape, records, and in braille.

### *The summer reading banquet offers many enticing dishes —*

**Story Hours**. Parents, grandparents, and teenagers are among the storytellers.

**Creative Writing**. Children write everything from rap lyrics to their own Adirondack fables.

**Sing-Alongs and Dramatics**. Children and families see magic shows, juggling, puppets, and plays – libraries can be centers of summer entertainment.

**Workshops**. Children of all ages learn storytelling, writing, baby-sitting, ethnic cooking, T-shirt decorating, and much more!

*The Nassau Library System and a statewide committee developed the 1993 summer reading program through a Federal Library Services and Construction Act grant. Gaylord Information Systems provided corporate support.*

[1]Jill Locke, *The Effectiveness of Summer Reading Programs in Public Libraries in the United States*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1988. p. 82.

[2]Sandra Stroner Sivulich, *New York Is Reading Country*, introduction, New York State Summer Reading Program, 1992.

[3]Lamar Alexander, U.S. Education Secretary, comment on *Reading In and Out of School*, issued by the National Center for Education Statistics, May 1992.

[4]John T. Guthrie, "Research Views: How Much to Read," *Reading Teacher*, October 1979. pp. 110-111.

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